UKRAINIAN FOLK TALES

HERITAGE

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DNIPRO PUBLISHERS, KIEV · 1974

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Once upon a time there was a man who had an old tomcat. He was so old that he could not catch a mouse. So the man took him to a forest to get rid of him. What good is he to me since I only feed him for nothing, thought the man; let him fend for himself in the forest. And he left the tomcat there and went away. A Vixen happened to rove in that forest, and she came across the Cat.

"Who are you?" she asked him.

"I'm Pan Kotsky," he answered.

"Listen, what if you be my husband and I your wife," said the Vixen.

The Cat agreed. The Vixen took him to her lair and tried to please him in every way possible. Whenever she got hold of a hen she did not take a single bite of it, but immediately brought it to the Cat.

Once the Hare met the Vixen and said:

"Vixen, deary, could I come tonight and woo you?"

"Oh no, I have Pan Kotsky to take care of me now, so you better watch out that he doesn't tear you to tatters."

The Hare broadcast the news to the Wolf, the Bear and the Boar. They all came together to hold council on how they could have a look at the horrible Pan Kotsky, and decided to give a feast in his honor.

Then they discussed how they should go about arranging the feast.

"I'll go and get some meat for the *borshch*," said the Wolf.

"And I'll get some beets and potatoes," said the Boar.

"I'll fetch some honey for a titbit," said the Bear.

"And I'll get some cabbage," said the Hare.

After they had got all these things together, they started cooking. When everything was ready, they had to decide who was to go and invite Pan Kotsky to the feast.

"I won't be fast enough if it comes to showing a light pair of heels," said the Bear.

"And I, too, am clumsy," said the Boar.

"I'm old and a bit dim-sighted," said the Wolf. "There's only the Hare left who can do the job."

When the Hare ran up to the Vixen's lair, she came out and saw him standing on his hind paws by the door.

"What have you come for?" she asked.

"The Wolf, the Bear, the Boar and I humbly invite you and your Pan Kotsky to our feast."

"All right, I'll come with him. But see that all of you hide somewhere or else he'll make short work of you."

The Hare returned to his friends and said;

"The Vixen told us to hide, because when Pan Kotsky comes he's sure to tear us to pieces."

Everyone started to look for a place to hide. The Bear climbed a tree, the Wolf hid behind a shrub, the Boar dug into the leaves and twigs, and the Hare sneaked off behind a bush.

And then came the Vixen along with her Pan Kotsky. When she led him up to the table and he saw the mountain of food on it, he cried out:

"Mia-ow-rr! Mia-ow-rr! Mia-ow-rr!"

Is he saying 'more!', thought those who lay in hiding. How do you like that fiend? What's there isn't enough for him, he wants more. In the end he'll gobble up all of us.

Pan Kotsky jumped on the table and greedily fell on the food. When he had gorged himself, he stretched out on the table. The Boar, who had dug himself under the leaves and twigs near the table, wiggled his tail when a gnat bit into it. The Cat thought it was a mouse and pounced upon it only to sink his claws into the Boar's hide. Up sprang the Boar, and ran for his life! Pan Kotsky was so frightened at the sight that he jumped on the tree and scrambled up to where the Bear was sitting. When the Bear saw that the fiend was heading for him, he started to climb up higher and higher till the branches could not hold him any longer and — whop! — he fell down on the Wolf, nearly knocking the life out of the poor thing. The beasts took to their heels, fleeing in all directions, and the Hare followed them as fast as his legs would carry him.

"Wow, that was a narrow escape," said the foursome when they came together. "What do you say, such a little squirt, but he nearly made mincemeat out of all of us!"

FOXY-LOXY AND PALSY-WOLFIE

Once upon a time there was an Old Man and an Old Woman. One Sunday the Old Woman baked poppy-seed rolls. When they were done, she took them out of the oven and put them in a bowl on the windowsill to cool. Presently a vixen came running past the house, and sniffed — what lovely rolls! She sneaked up to the window, snatched one of the rolls and scampered off. Then she ran into a field, sat down, picked all the poppy seeds out of the roll, stuffed it with chaff, pressed the two halves of the roll together, and hurried off.

On her way she came across some cowherds driving cattle.

"Hullo, boys!"

"Hullo, Foxy-Loxy!"

"Give me a bully-calf for a poppy-seed roll!"

"What, a bully-calf for a poppy-seed roll? What's the idea!"

"Oh, but it's so sweet, you'll simply love it!"

She wheedled and she coaxed till one of the boys went and gave her the bully-calf.

"Now listen, boys," she said, "see you don't start eating the roll before I reach the woods!"

And off she ran, driving the bully-calf ahead. The boys waited till she disappeared in the woods, then took to eating the roll. But oh! it was all chaff inside...

Meanwhile, the vixen drove the bully-calf into the woods, tied him to an oak tree, and went to fell some trees to make herself a sledge. She went about her work, repeating all the while:

"Fall down, trees — crooked and straight! Fall down, trees — crooked and straight!"

Then she made herself a sledge, hitched up the bully-calf and drove off. Presently the wolf came running her way.

"Hullo, Foxy-Loxy!"

"Hullo, Palsy-Wolfie!"

"Where'd you get the bully-calf and the sledge?"

"Oh, I earned the bully-calf and I made the sledge myself!"

"Well, give me a lift then!"

"How can I? Why, you'd break my sledge!"

"No, I won't. I'll put only one paw on it."

"All right, go ahead."

So the wolf put one paw on the sledge and they drove on. After a while the wolf said:

"You know what, Foxy-Loxy, I'll put another paw on the sledge."

"But, Palsy-Wolfie, you'll break it!"

"No, I won't!"

"All right, go ahead!"

The wolf put a second paw on the sledge and they drove on and on, when all of a sudden — creak!

"Ah me!" cried the vixen. "The sledge is breaking!"

"Oh no, Foxy-Loxy, that's only my bones creaking."

They continued on their way, and again the wolf said:

"You know what, Foxy-Loxy, I'll put my third paw on the sledge."

"But where can you put it! You'll break my sledge completely!"

"Oh no, why should I break it?"

"All right!"

No sooner did he put the third paw on the sledge, than — creak! creak!

"Hey, wolfie, the sledge is creaking. Get off or you'll break it!"

"Are you making up things, Foxy-Loxy? That was a nut I just cracked."

"Was it? Give me one, then!"

"It was the last one I had."

After some while the wolf said:

"You know what, Foxy-Loxy, I'll sit down on the sledge!"

"You'll what?! But there's no room!"

"Don't you worry, I'll double up somehow!"

"You'll break my sledge completely! Then what will I bring my firewood home in?"

"Now, now, why should I break it? I'm not that heavy. I simply must sit down, Foxy-Loxy, for I'm so tired. I'll be careful, really."

"All right, go ahead. Guess I have no choice."

He climbed onto the sledge, and no sooner had he done so, when — crack! bang! crash! — the sledge broke to pieces.

What a hullabaloo the vixen raised!

"Oh, you vile cheat, you tramp of a wolf! Look what you've done!"

She fumed and she raved, and finally said:

"Now go and chop down some trees for a sledge."

"But how can I, Foxy-Loxy, when I don't know how or even what kind of trees?"

"Oh, you wretched dope! So you know how to break a

sledge, but you don't know how to fell a tree, is that it? All you have to say is 'Fall down, trees — crooked and straight! Fall down, trees — crooked and straight! Fall down, trees — crooked and straight!' Understand?"

So the wolf went off into the woods and set to work, repeating all the while:

"Fall down, trees — crooked and crooked! Fall down, trees — crooked and crooked!"

After felling a number of trees, he hauled them to the vixen. She took one look at them, and they were so knotty and twisted and crooked they wouldn't do even for a moldboard, let alone sledge runners! Again she raged at the wolf.

"How did you chop them down?" she yelled.

"They just fell that way!"

"But why didn't you say the words I told you to?"

"I did. I said, 'Fall down, trees — crooked and crooked!' "

"What a stupid you are and a good-for-nothing at that. Wait here and look after the bully-calf while I go and fell the trees myself!"

As the wolf sat there he grew very hungry. He rummaged in the sledge, but couldn't find anything to eat. He wondered how to satisfy his hunger and could not think of anything better than to eat the bully-calf. So he fell upon him, tore a hole in his side, and ate out all the meat leaving the bones and the hide into which he chased a flock of sparrows. Then he stopped up the hole with straw, leaned the bully-calf against a hedge propping him up with a stick, and made himself scarce. When the vixen returned, she saw a wisp of straw sticking out of the bully-calf's side. She pulled out the wisp, and that instant — frrr! — the flock of sparrows flew out of the hole. When she took hold of the stick, whop! — the bully-calf fell down.

"Just you wait, you vile cheat!" she raged. "I'll get even with you yet!"

And she ran away, mad.

Running along the road, she came upon a caravan of *chumak* carters with wagonloads of fish. The vixen lay down in the middle of the road, pretending she was dead.

"Hey, boys, look what a wonderful fox!" one of the carters shouted.

They crowded around her, turning her this way and that. In the end they decided to take her along, since her fur would make wonderful caps for the children. They threw her on the last wagon and drove on.

Noticing that no one was paying any attention to her, the vixen started throwing fish out of the wagon. When she had

thrown out quite a few onto the road, she quietly jumped from the wagon and slipped away. The carters drove on, while the vixen picked up all the fish lying on the road.

No sooner had she sat down and made herself comfortable, intending to have a good feast, than Palsy-Wolfie came running along.

"Hullo, Foxy-Loxy!"

"Hullo!"

"What are you doing, Foxy-Loxy?"

"Eating fish, of course."

"Won't you give me some too?"

"What trouble it was catching them, and you want me to give you the fish just like that? Nothing doing! Go catch them yourself!"

"How can I? I don't know how to catch fish. You might at least teach me how to do it!"

"Oh, there's nothing hard about it. All you have to do is to go to an ice-hole, stick your tail into it, and sit there quietly, repeating all the while 'Get the bait, fish — big and small!' And you'll have them!"

"Thanks for the advice!"

The wolf ran quickly to the river, sat down by an ice-hole, stuck his tail into it, and said over and over:

"Get the bait, fish — big and big only! Get the bait, fish — big and big only! Get the bait, fish — big and big only!"

You see, he was so greedy he wanted only the big ones. That day the weather was bitter cold. And that suited the vixen's scheme wonderfully.

"Freeze, wolf tail, freeze! Freeze, wolf tail, freeze!" she repeated all the while, running up and down the river bank to keep herself warm.

"What are you saying, Foxy-Loxy?" the wolf asked.

"I'm just saying 'Get the bait, fish — big and small!"

"Now let me try: Get the bait, fish — big and big only!"

The wolf wriggled his tail and he felt it had become heavy.

"You just wait a little more," said the vixen. "The fish have only started to hang on to your tail."

Then after a while she said:

"Now pull them out, Palsy-Wolfie!"

The wolf gave a pull, but his tail had frozen fast in the ice-hole and he could not pull it out.

"Oh, you wretched beast, what have you done!" the vixen yelled at him. "You said all the time 'Get the bait, fish — big and big only' and the big ones have hung on to your tail and

now you can't pull it out. You know what, I'll go call someone to help you."

And off she ran toward the village.

"The wolf's in the village, the wolf's in the village, come out everyone and give him a drubbing!" she shouted, running down the village street.

Instantly the village was astir. The people came running out of their houses, some carrying axes, others pitchforks and flails, and the womenfolk oven forks and pokers. They made for the river and fell upon the wolf and gave him such a thrashing that his bones rattled.

In the meanwhile the vixen had sneaked into one of the houses. There was nobody home — the mistress of the house had run down to the river to flog the wolf and had left behind a vat of unkneaded dough. The vixen took some of the dough, dabbed her head with it, and ran out into the field. Presently the wolf came crawling along, more dead than alive — the poor thing was beaten black and blue. On seeing him, the vixen started to moan and to wail, pretending she was sick.

"Ah, it's you, you wily creature," said the wolf. "Just look what you've done to me. Because of you I've lost my tail."

"Oh, Palsy-Wolfie, how can you be so unfair," she said. "Don't you see that I've suffered more than you did? They cracked my skull and the brains are oozing out of my head. Palsy-Wolfie, take me on your back, for I can hardly walk!"

"But I can hardly stand on my feet myself!"

"You've lost only half of your tail, but my skull has been cracked. Oh, poor me, how will I ever get home!"

"All right, get on my back. Guess I have no choice!"

The vixen got onto his back, made herself comfortable, and kept on moaning and whining.

While the silly wolf carried his burden as best he could, the vixen kept saying to herself:

"The loser's carrying the winner! The loser's carrying the winner!"

"What's that you're saying, Foxy-Loxy?"

"Oh, I'm just saying that the loser is carrying a loser too."

After which she again mumbled to herself:

"The loser's carrying the winner!"

At long last they arrived at the vixen's den.

"Now get off my back, Foxy-Loxy, here's your home!"

She jumped down from his back, and shouted right to his face:

"The loser brought the winner home! The loser brought the winner home!"

Did the wolf get mad at her! He was about to pounce upon the vixen and tear her to pieces, when she scampered into her den. Hard as he tried the wolf could not get in. From time to time the vixen would stick her muzzle out of the den and tease the wolf:

"The loser brought the winner home!"

The wolf tried to get her out, but he could not.

"Pooh, the wretched beast!" he raged. "What a fool she made of me!"

For some time yet he raved by her den and then went his way.

As for the vixen, she lives happily to this very day, and woe to the hen that goes astray, for the vixen is cunning, the vixen is sly, and she gobbles her prey in the wink of an eye.

"We've got good company tonight and good porridge to make all of us happy. But I'm afraid there's too little water in the pot, so I'll go and fetch some more."

When he was out of earshot, he sighed with relief and muttered under his breath, "Blast that company, I'd better make myself scarce."

The second wolf waited and waited for him to return and then he, too, started to think and to wonder how to get away.

"How do you like that loafer?" he said. "Gadding about somewhere while all the water in the pot is boiling out. I'll go and find him, that son of a dog."

And he sneaked off, with never a thought of returning. The third wolf was sitting there waiting for his cronies in vain, and at last he said:

"Well, it seems I'll have to bring back those gadabouts myself."

And he, too, made off, happy he got away with it.

Then the goat said to the ram:

"Brother, let's eat up that porridge as fast as we can and clear off."

In the meanwhile the wolves got together and said:

"After all, why should we be afraid of a goat and a ram? Let's go and make short work of them!"

When they came back, the fire had gone out and there was no sign of the ram and the goat — the two had scrambled up a tall oak tree. The wolves did not have to search long before they spotted the fugitives in the tree. Since the goat was bolder, it had climbed to the top, but the ram was timid and only managed to get up to a lower branch.

"Now, you lie down and think," said the wolves to the shaggy wolf. "You're the oldest among us, so find of a way to get them down!"

The shaggy wolf lay down and started to think how to trick down the pair. The poor ram trembled like an aspen leaf and, suddenly losing his balance, he fell right down on the wolf below. The goat who was bolder started to yell:

"Leave that schemer for me alive, for I want to tear off his hide!"

At that the wolves took to flight, for none of them wanted to lose his precious hide.

The goat and the ram climbed down the tree safe and sound. Soon they built themselves a home where they are living in peace and in glee to this day.

He rolled and he rolled, when suddenly he met a Bear.
"Kolobok, Kolobok, I'll eat you up!" growled the Bear.
"Don't eat me," pleaded Kolobok. "I'll sing you a song."
"Good, sing it, but make it fast."

"I've been swept up in a bin,
Baked and browned on a tin,
I've run away from Grandma,
I've run away from Grandpa,
And I'll run away from you."

And again he took himself off.
He rolled and he rolled till he came across a Vixen.
"Kolobok, Kolobok, I'll eat you up," said the Vixen.
"Don't eat me, Sister Vixen, and I'll sing you a song."
"All right, go ahead."

"I've been swept up in a bin,
Baked and browned on a tin,
I've run away from Grandma,
I've run away from Grandpa,
And I'll run away from you."

"Oh, what a beautiful song that is!" exclaimed the Vixen. "But, deary, I'm a little deaf of one ear, so would you please sit on my tongue and repeat the song once more so I'd hear it better?"

Kolobok jumped on the Vixen's tongue and started to sing:

"I've been swept up in a bin,
Baked and browned on a tin,
I've run away from Grandma,
I've run away from Grandpa,
And I'll run..."

And there and then — gulp! — the Vixen gobbled up Kolobok the Johnnycake.

Once upon a time there lived a man and his wife, and they had six sons and one daughter. One day the sons went out to plow and asked their sister to bring them something to eat for lunch.

"But how shall I know where you are?" she asked.

"We'll make a track with the plowshare from our house to the meadow yonder. All you have to do is follow the furrow and you'll find us," they said, and left.

Now, beyond that meadow, in a wood, lived a dragon. He rolled up the furrow like some carpet, and spread his own one right up to the doors of his palace. When the girl set out with

the lunch for her brothers, she followed the furrow till she came to the palace. And there in the courtyard the dragon seized her.

When the brothers returned home, they said crossly to their mother:

"We've been plowing all day, and you couldn't bring us something to eat."

"What do you mean?" she said in astonishment. "Why, Olenka left home early with your lunch! I thought she'd be coming back with you. But now it seems she's lost her way."

"Let's go and find her," said the brothers.

The six of them left and followed the furrow. They, too, came to the dragon's palace, and there they saw their sister.

"My brothers, my poor brothers!" she cried. "Where shall I hide you? When the dragon comes back he's sure to eat you up!"

Presently the dragon arrived.

"Well, well, it's human flesh I smell," he said. "Did you come in peace, boys, or to fight me?"

"We came to fight you," they said.

"All right then. Let's go to the iron thrashing floor and fight it out."

They did not fight long. The dragon struck the six of them down with one heavy blow, and then threw them into a deep dungeon.

In the meanwhile, the man and his wife waited in vain for their sons to return. One day as the woman went to the river to do her wash, she came across a rolling pea. She picked it up and ate it.

After some time a son was born to her, and they named him Kotihoroshko Rollipea.

The boy grew not by the day, but by the hour. Once the father and son were digging a well, and they came to a huge boulder. The father went to call the neighbors to give him a hand in lifting the boulder out of the well. While he was gone, Rollipea picked up the boulder and threw it out of the well as if it weighed nothing at all. When the neighbors arrived and saw what he had done, they were awe-struck. They were so frightened by his strength that they wanted to kill him. And when he took that same boulder, threw it up into the sky and caught it in his hand, they simply fled in fear.

Father and son went on digging the well till they came to a large piece of iron. Rollipea pulled it out of the ground and took it with him.

Time passed, and one day Rollipea asked his parents:

"Is it true that I had six brothers and a sister?"

"Yes, son," they said. "You had six brothers and a sister."

And they told him what had happened to them.

"Then I'll go and find them," he said.

"No, son, it's no use, don't go," his parents implored. "Your six brothers have been killed, so how can you do anything all by yourself?"

"No, I must go," he said. "Whatever happens, I must free my kin."

He took the iron piece he had dug out of the well and went to the smith.

"Make me a large cudgel from this," he said to him.

The smith got down to work and made him such a large cudgel that he could hardly carry it out of the smithy. But Rollipea easily swung the cudgel over his head and threw it high up into the sky.

"I'll go and take a nap," he said to his father. "Wake me when the cudgel comes flying back to earth after twelve days."

He went and lay down. On the thirteenth day the cudgel came flying down from the sky with a great roar. When the father woke him, Rollipea jumped to his feet and stretched out one finger in the path of the cudgel. When it hit his finger, the cudgel broke in two.

"No, that's not the cudgel I need to free my brothers and sister with," he said. "I must have a better one."

He took the pieces to the smith and said:

"Here, reforge this into a cudgel which would suit me."

The smith made him a still bigger one. Rollipea took it and threw it into the air as before and lay down to sleep for twelve days. On the thirteenth day the cudgel came down from the sky with a roar that made the earth tremble. His parents woke him, and he jumped to his feet and stretched out one finger in the path of the descending cudgel. When it hit his finger, it bent slightly.

"Well, this one seems good enough to free my brothers and sister with," he said. "Mother, bake me some loaves of bread and make me some biscuits for my journey."

He took the cudgel, the knapsack with the loaves and biscuits, made his farewells, and left.

He followed the track of the furrow which was hardly visible by now, and soon entered a wood. He went on and on through the wood till he came to a large castle. He entered the courtyard, walked through several halls, but the dragon was nowhere to be seen. Only Olenka was at home.

"How do you do, maiden," said Rollipea.

"How do you do. Why have you come here? When the dragon appears, he's sure to eat you up."

"Well, maybe he won't" said Rollipea. "And who are you?"

"I am the only daughter of my parents," she said. "When the dragon seized me, my six brothers came to rescue me and died."

"Where are they?" Rollipea asked.

"The dragon threw them into a dungeon, and I don't know if they are living or dead!"

"Maybe I could free you?" said Rollipea.

"How could you?" she said sorrowfully. "Six have already tried and failed. How could you possibly do it all by yourself?"

"Well, we'll see," said Rollipea.

He sat down on a windowsill and waited for the dragon.

Then the dragon came flying home. As he entered the castle, he said:

"Well, well, isn't it human flesh I smell?"

"You surely do," said Rollipea.

"Did you come in peace, laddie, or to fight me?" asked the dragon.

"Peace with you?!" cried Rollipea. "No fear, I came to fight you."

"All right then, let's go to the iron thrashing floor," said the dragon.

"All right, let's go!" said Rollipea.

Arriving there, the dragon said:

"You start first!"

"No, you start first," said Rollipea.

The dragon hit Rollipea so hard that he pushed him ankle-deep into the iron thrashing floor. Rollipea pulled himself out and swung his cudgel with such might that he drove the dragon into the iron thrashing floor right up to his knees. The dragon pulled himself out and hit Rollipea, driving him into the thrashing floor up to his knees. But when Rollipea hit the dragon the second time, he drove him in right up to his waist, and with the third blow he knocked the life out of him.

Then he went to the deep dark dungeon and released his brothers who were almost dead by that time. He took his six brothers and his sister, along with all the gold and silver that there was in the dragon's castle, and led the way home.

But he did not tell that he was their brother. They walked and walked for a long time, and then sat down under an oak tree to rest. Rollipea was very tired after the battle, and soon fell asleep. In the meanwhile, his brothers were talking things over:

"People will surely laugh at us when they find out that the six of us couldn't get the better of the dragon, and this little squirt did it alone. And besides, it's most likely he'll keep all the dragon's riches for himself."

After much argument they decided that while he was fast asleep they'd tie him to the oak tree with sturdy ropes, and leave him at the mercy of the wild beasts.

And so they tied him to the tree, and left.

Rollipea did not feel a thing during his sleep. He slept through the day and through the night, and when he awoke he found himself bound to the tree. He gave such a mighty wrench that he uprooted the tree, and hoisting it on his shoulder started homeward.

As he approached the house, he heard his brothers asking their mother:

"Did you have any more children after we went away?"

"Of course," she said. "We have another son, Kotihoroshko Rollipea is his name. He's gone to find you and free you."

"Oh Lordy, so it's him we roped to the tree!" the brothers gasped. "Let's run there as fast as we can and untie him."

Hearing this, Rollipea got very angry and hurled the oak tree against the house, nearly shattering it to pieces.

"All right, if that's what you are, I'll go out into the big wide world."

And swinging his cudgel onto his shoulder, he left his home village.

As he walked, he saw a mountain on one side and a mountain on the other, and between them a man who was pushing them apart with his feet and his hands.

"God help!" said Rollipea.

"All hail!" said the man.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm pushing the mountains aside to make way."

"And where are you bound for?" asked Rollipea.

"Happiness to seek."

"That's what I'm doing too. What's your name?"

"Vernihora Heavahill, and yours?"

"Kotihoroshko Rollipea. Let's go together!"

"All right!"

As they walked on, they saw a man in a wood swinging his hands left and right, and with every sweep he uprooted several oak trees.

"God help!" they said.

"All hail!"

"What are you doing?"

"Uprooting trees to make more space."

"And where are you bound for?"

"Happiness to seek."

"That's the same thing we're doing. What's your name?"

"Vernidub Turnanoak, and yours?"

"I'm Kotihoroshko Rollipea and this is Vernihora Heavahill. Join us!"

"All right!"

As the three of them walked on, they saw a man with huge whiskers standing on a river bank. When he twirled one of his whiskers, the waters parted making a dry passage across the bottom of the river.

"God help!" they said.

"All hail!"

"What are you doing?"

"Making the river flow back so I can cross it."

"And where are you bound for?"

"Happiness to seek."

"That's the same thing we're doing. What's your name?"

"Krutivus Whirlawhisker, and what's yours?"

"I'm Kotihoroshko Rollipea, this is Vernihora Heavahill, and this is Vernidub Turnanoak. Would you like to join us?"

"Oh yes, with pleasure."

They went on, and the going was so easy for them, because when mountains stood in their way Heavahill pushed them apart, and when they came upon a wood, Turnanoak uprooted the trees, and when a river obstructed their path, Whirlawhisker made the waters part. Soon they entered a large forest and came upon a little cottage in it. They entered the cottage, but there was nobody home.

"Well, we'll spend the night here," said Rollipea.

When they rose next morning, Rollipea said:

"You, Heavahill, stay home and make us something to eat, while we'll go hunting for game."

Heavahill started making the dinner, and when it was ready, he lay down to sleep.

Presently someone knocked at the door.

"Let me in!"

"What kind of a lord are you, open the door yourself," said Heavahill.

The door opened and someone said:

"Help me over the threshold, will ye!"

"What kind of a lord are you, crawl over it yourself."

And there a little old man with a beard trailing six feet behind him crawled over the threshold into the cottage. The next moment he grabbed hold of Heavahill's hair and hung him on a nail in the wall. Then he ate and drank everything that there was in the cottage, tore a strip of skin off Heavahill's back, and left.

Heavahill twitched and wriggled on the nail. Finally, he managed to free himself by loosing a good tuft of hair, and hastily got a meal of sorts together. When his friends returned, he was just finishing making the dinner.

"Why are you late with the dinner?" they asked.

"Well, you see, I dosed off a bit."

They ate of the food and went to sleep. Come morning, Rollipea said:

"Now, Turnanoak, you stay home, while we'll go hunting for game."

After they left, Turnanoak made the dinner, and when it was ready, he lay down to sleep.

Presently someone knocked at the door.

"Let me in!"

"What kind of a lord are you, open the door yourself," said Turnanoak.

"Help me over the threshold, will ye!" someone said.

"What kind of a lord are you, crawl over it yourself."

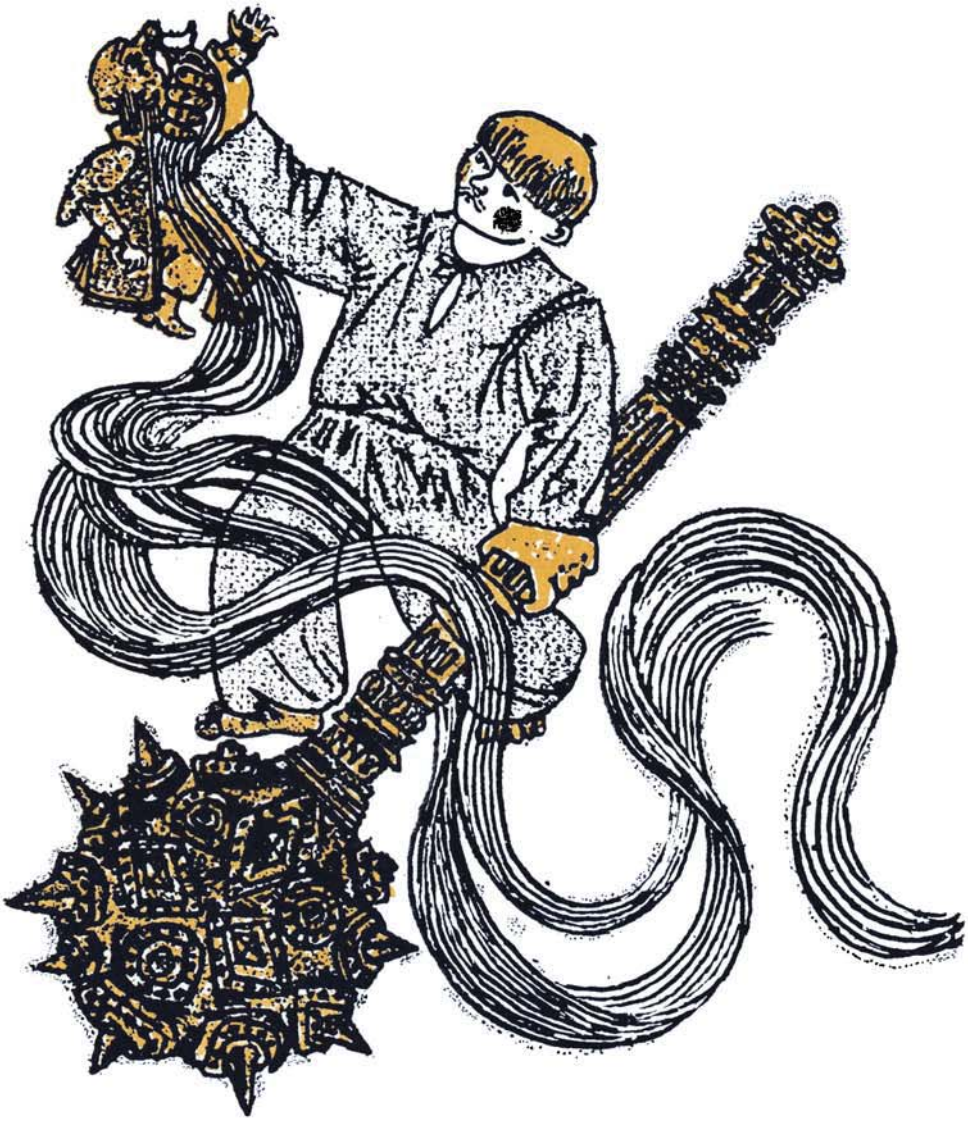
And there a little old man with a beard trailing six feet behind him crawled over the threshold into the cottage. The next moment he grabbed hold of Turnanoak's hair and hung him on the nail in the wall. Then he ate and drank everything that there was in the cottage, tore a strip of skin off Turnanoak's back, and left.

Turnanoak twitched and wriggled on the nail. Finally, he managed to get down, and hastened to get a meal of sorts together. He had hardly finished, when his friends returned.

"Why are you late with the dinner," they asked.

"Well, you see, I took a little nap..."

But Heavahill kept his tongue: he suspected what had happened.



On the third day Whirlawhisker stayed home, and the same thing befell him.

"What a bunch of lazybones you are!" said Rollipea. "Well, tomorrow I'll stay at home and you three go hunt for game."

So the next morning they went to hunt, while Rollipea stayed behind. He made the dinner and lay down to rest.

Presently someone banged on the door and shouted:

"Open up!"

"Wait a minute, I'll open right away," said Rollipea.

He went and opened the door and there before him stood the little old man with the beard trailing six feet behind him.

"Help me over the threshold!" he said.

Rollipea helped him over the threshold. No sooner had he done so than the little old man started pushing and shoving Rollipea.

"Hey, what's the idea?" said Rollipea surprised.

"You'll see what the idea is," said the little old man and reached for Rollipea's hair. He was about to grab hold of it when Rollipea seized the little old man's long beard.

He picked up an ax, dragged the old man by his beard to an oak tree, split it, tucked the beard into the crack, pulled the ax out, and left the little old man with his beard pinched in the crack.

"If that's how you repay my hospitality, you old codger, you'll have to sit here and cool off till I come back," said Rollipea.

He went into the cottage, and found his friends already there.

"Is dinner ready?" they wanted to know.

"Of course," said Rollipea.

After they had eaten, Rollipea said:

"Now let's go outside and I'll show you something you've never seen in your life before!"

He led them to the oak tree. But the oak tree was gone and so was the little old man: he had pulled the tree out by the roots and made off. Rollipea told his friends what had happened, and they, on their part, told him how the little old man had hung them on the nail in the wall and torn strips of skin off their backs.

"I didn't think he was so wily," said Rollipea. "Let's go and search for him."

They followed the trail the little old man had left dragging the oak, and soon came to a deep, fathomless hole. Said Rollipea:

"Heavahill, climb down there!"

"Let the deuce take him!" he said.

"Well, Turnanoak, what about you?" said Rollipea.

But Turnanoak refused, and so did Whirlawhisker.

"Since you don't want to climb down," said Rollipea, "I'll do it myself. Come on, let's all braid a rope."

They made a long, long rope. Rollipea took hold of one end, and commanded:

"Lower me down!"

They lowered him down for a long, long time till he reached the bottom right in the nether world. Rollipea wandered about for some time till he came to a large palace. Inside the palace shone and glittered and sparkled with gold and precious stones. He went through the chambers and came upon a Princess more beautiful than any the world had ever seen.

"Oh, oh!" she cried. "What brings you here?"

"I'm looking for a little old man with a beard trailing six feet behind him," said Rollipea.

"Oh yes," she said, "there is such a little old man here. He is busy right now trying to free his beard. Don't you go near him or else he'll kill you like he did so many before."

"No, he won't do that," said Rollipea, "for it was I who got his beard pinched in that oak tree. And what are you doing here?"

"I'm a Princess," she said. "This little old man stole me and he's keeping me prisoner here."

"I'll free you," said Rollipea. "Show me where he is."

She led him to the old man. By the time, however, he had already freed his beard. Upon seeing Rollipea, he asked:

"Did you come in peace, or to fight me?"

"In peace? Hardly," said Rollipea. "I've come to fight you."

And they started to fight. They fought and they fought, and in the end Rollipea got the better of the little old man and killed him with his cudgel. Then Rollipea and the Princess collected all the gold and precious stones into three sacks, and went to the hole through which he had descended into the nether world.

"Hey, brothers, are you still there?" Rollipea shouted from below.

"Yes, we are!" they responded.

He tied one sack to the rope and tugged it for them to pull up, shouting:

"That's for you!"

They pulled it up and lowered the rope once again. He tied the second sack to it, and shouted:

"And that's yours, too!"

He gave away the third sack to them as well, and then tied the Princess to the rope and shouted from below:

"And that's for me."

Up she went, and now it was Rollipea's turn to be pulled out.

But his friends decided otherwise. Why should we pull him out, they thought, let the Princess be ours as well. We'll pull him halfway and then let him drop to his death.

Rollipea, however, smelled a rat, so he tied a large boulder to the rope instead of himself, and shouted:

"Now, pull me up!"

They pulled the boulder halfway, as they had agreed, and then let go of the rope, and — bang! — the stone hit the bottom with a thud.

"Now I see what sort of friends you are!" shouted Rollipea in a rage from below.

There was nothing for it but to go wandering about the nether world then. He wandered about for some time, when suddenly dark clouds covered the sky and heavy rain and hail poured down. Rollipea hid beneath an oak tree, and there he heard little griffins squeaking in their nest in the branches. He climbed up the tree and covered them with his coat. When the rain stopped, a large griffin, the father of the little fledglings, arrived. Seeing that they were covered and safe and sound, he asked:

"Who was it that covered you?"

"We'll tell you if you won't eat him," they said.

"I won't," he said.

"There's a man beneath the oak, he was the one who covered us."

The griffin flew down to Rollipea and said:

"Tell me what can I do for you. I'll give you anything you wish. This is the first time I found my children safe and sound. Every time I leave my fledglings a rainstorm breaks loose and they drown in their nest."

"Carry me to the other world," said Rollipea.

"That's a very big request!" said the griffin. "But all right, fly we must. Take along with you six vats of meat and six vats of water. During flight when I turn my head to the right, throw a piece of meat into my mouth, and when I turn my head to the left, give me some water to drink, otherwise I won't manage to carry you to the other world."

Rollipea took six vats of meat and six vats of water, climbed onto the griffin's back, and they flew away. Every time the

griffin turned his head to the right, Rollipea threw him a piece of meat, and when he turned his head to the left, he gave him some water to drink. They flew for a long time in this way. They had almost reached the other world when the griffin turned his head to the right, but alack! there was not a single piece of meat left in the vat. So Rollipea without much ado cut a chunk of flesh out of his leg and threw it into the griffin's beak. They arrived in the other world, and the griffin asked him:

"That was a tasty piece of meat you gave me in the end, what was it?"

Rollipea showed him his mangled leg and said:

"That's where it came from."

The griffin coughed up the piece of flesh, flew away to fetch some healing water, placed the bit back in its place, sprinkled it with water, and the leg was as good as before.

The griffin flew back home, while Rollipea went to seek his treacherous friends. They were now living in the palace of the Princess' father, quarreling and fighting all the time, because each one of them wanted to marry the Princess.

When Rollipea appeared, they were frightened out of their wits.

"Now, my dear brothers," said Rollipea. "Since you betrayed me so meanly, I shall punish you as you deserve."

And he did as he promised.

Rollipea married the Princess and they lived happily ever after.

Many, many years ago, long before the times that we can call to mind, long before our fathers and grandfathers were born into this world, there lived a poor man and his wife who had just one son, and he was not like a real son should be to his parents. So lazy was that firstling of theirs that there are no words to describe it. He would not do anything but lie day in and day out on the oven, sifting the drying millet through his fingers. He was almost twenty years old, but you could not bring him down from the oven. If he was given something to eat, he ate, if not, he went without food.

"What shall we do with you, son?" his father and mother complained. "Other children are a great help to their parents, but you only eat our bread for nothing!"

But he paid no heed to their words, sifting the millet through his fingers all the while. Now, when a boy is five or six years old he already goes around in pants and tries to give a helping hand to his parents. But that lazy bum was already reaching to the ceiling, yet he had no pants nor did he lift his little finger to do something in the household.

The parents were in distress, and one day the mother said to the father:

"What do you intend to do with him? He's come of age now, yet that lout can't do a thing. What if you send him to learn some trade maybe other people could make something of him?"

They put their heads together, and shortly after the father apprenticed him to a tailor. He stayed there three or four days and ran away, came home, climbed on the oven and lay about the whole day as before. The father gave him a good drubbing thereupon, scolded him, and hired him out to a cobbler. But he

ran away from him, too. The father gave him a sound drubbing and sent him to a blacksmith. And there, too, he did not stay long.

"What am I to do now?" complained the father hopelessly. "There is but one thing left. I'll take that good-for-nothing to another Czardom, maybe there somebody will take him into service and he won't be able to run away."

The next day they set out on the journey.

They walked and they walked till they entered a forest. So dark and dense was it that they could see neither the ground under their feet nor the sky over their heads.

Seeing a charred tree-stump by the footpath, the father said:

"I'm a bit tired and will rest for a while."

"Oh! it's only now I feel how done up I am," he said, sitting down on the stump.

No sooner had he uttered these words than out from under the stump crawled an old dwarf, with a wrinkled face and a green beard reaching right to his knees.

"What do you want of me, man?" asked the dwarf.

The old man started in surprise. Where could that creature have come from? he wondered.

"I didn't call you," he said. "Begone!"

"What do you mean you didn't call me?" said the dwarf. "You did, I heard you."

"Who are you anyway?" asked the man.

"I am Oh, the King of this forest," replied the dwarf. "Why did you call me?"

"Be off with you. I never called you!" said the man.

"Yes, you did," insisted the dwarf. "You said 'Oh!' "

"I said it because I was very tired."

"Where are you bound for?" asked Oh.

"Into the wide, wide world, that's were I'm going," said the man. "I'm taking my son to hire out to somebody, maybe other people will teach him some trade, because back home I would no sooner apprentice him to a craftsman than he'd run away from him."

"Why not give him to me? I'll teach him some things," said the dwarf. "But I'll take him only on one condition: if you recognize him when you come for him in a year's time, you can take him with you, if not, he'll stay with me for another year."

"All right," said the man.

Then they shook hands on it, drank a glass or two to seal the deal, and the man went home, while Oh took the boy with him.

Oh led him into the nether world, to a green cottage covered with reeds. In that cottage everything was green: the walls were green, the benches were green, Oh's wife was green, and so were his children; in a word, everything was green there. Oh had wood nymphs for servants, and they, too, were green like rue.

"Sit down, servant," said Oh, "and have something to eat."

The nymphs brought him the food, and ... it also was green: he ate of it.

"Now then, servant," said Oh, "go and chop some wood and pile it up."

The boy went away. Whether he chopped the wood or not we do not know, but when Oh came out to see how he was doing, he found him fast asleep. Oh ordered then for some wood to be brought, put the tied-up servant on top of it, and set it afire. The servant was reduced to ashes. Oh picked up the ashes and scattered them to the winds. Then he took one of the little coals that had fallen out of the ashes and sprinkled it with living water, and lo and behold! the servant came back to life, but this time he was somewhat livlier and comlier than before.

Oh again ordered him to go and chop some wood, and again the servant dozed off. Oh burned him to ashes, then revived him with living water to a nicer looking lad than anyone could imagine. But still there was no change for the better, and Oh had to burn him a third time. One of the coals he sprinkled with living water, and instead of the lazy, sleepy lad there stood a strong and manly Cossack, too handsome for mere words to describe.

A year passed, and the father set off for his boy. In the forest he found the charred tree-stump, sat down on it and said:

"Oh!"

Immediately Oh crawled out from below.

"Hail to you, man," he said.

"Hail to you, Oh."

"What do you want of me?" asked Oh.

"I've come for my son," the man replied.

"All right, come along. If you recognize him, he's yours, if not, he'll stay with me for another year."

The man then followed Oh. When they came to his cottage, Oh took a measure of millet, spilled it on the ground, and a host of roosters appeared.

"Well, identify which one of them is your son," said Oh.

The man looked and looked, but he could not tell the difference between the roosters — they seemed all alike to him.

"Since you didn't recognize your son," said Oh, "I'm afraid I'll have to keep him for another year."

The man went home.

Another year passed, and again he went to Oh. He sat down on the stump and said:

"Oh!"

Oh came out to him.

"Let's go," he said, and led him into a sheepfold full of rams, one like the other. The man looked and he looked, but identify his son he could not.

"Well, if that's the case you can go home," said Oh. "Your son will stay with me for another year."

The man went home brokenhearted.

When the third year passed, he again went to see Oh. On his way he met a man all in white and his hair white as milk.

"Hail to you, man!"

"And hail to you!"

"Where are you going?"

"I'm on my way to Oh to free my son," he replied.

"What do you mean to free...?"

"Well, it so happened that...," and the man told the white oldster how he gave his son to Oh and on what condition.

"That's quite an evil plight you're in, he'll pull your leg for a long time yet."

"I've come to realize that myself," said the man, "but what can I do? Maybe you could tell me how to identify my son?"

"Yes, I can!" said the oldster.

"I beg of you, tell me how to do it! Although he has not been much of a son to me he still is my own flesh and blood."

"Listen to me," said the oldster. "When you come to Oh, he'll show you a flock of pigeons. Now, choose the one which will be sitting under a pear tree pruning its feathers. That will be your son."

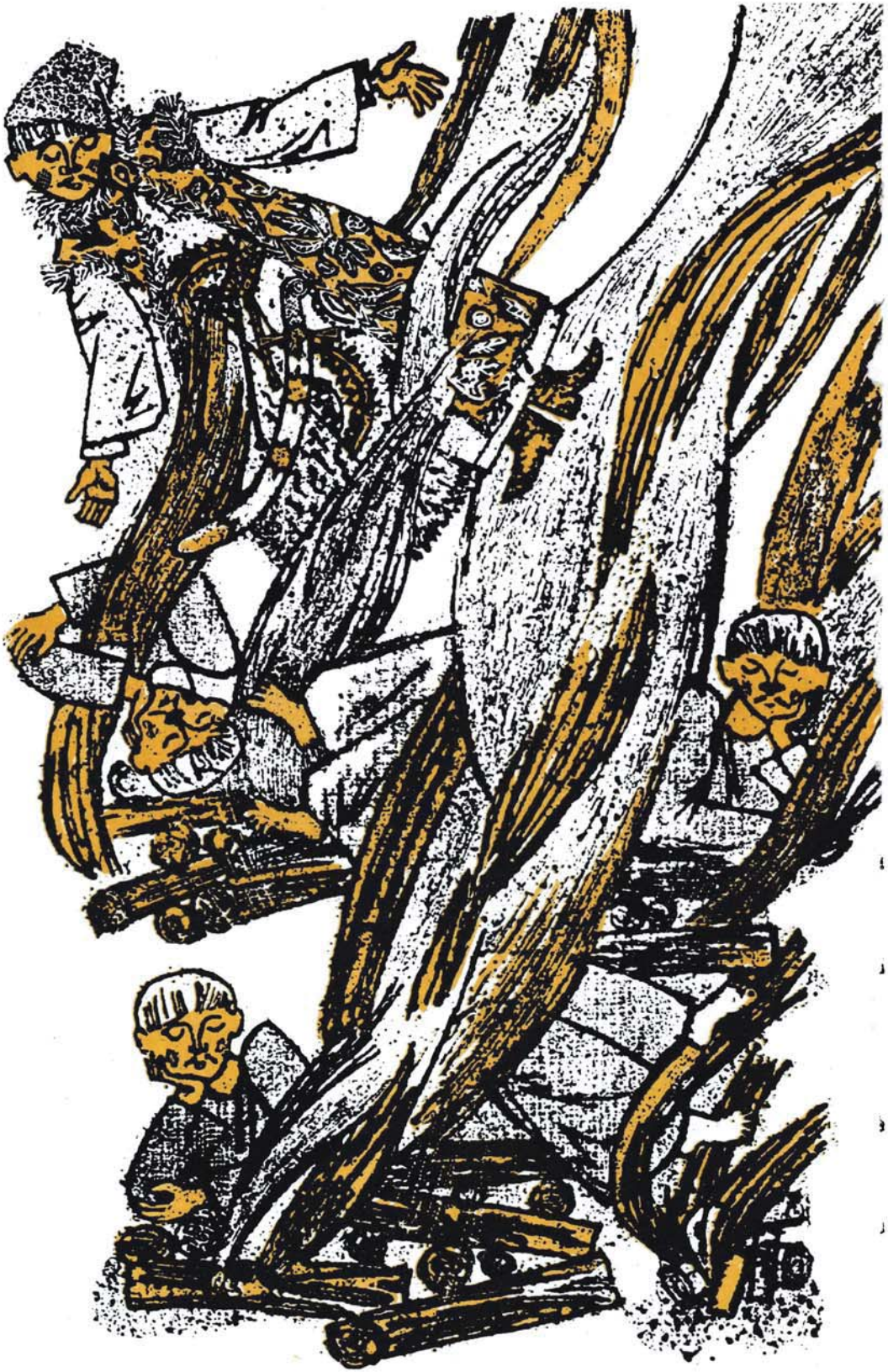
The man thanked the oldster nicely and went on. When he came to the stump, he said:

"Oh!"

In no time Oh was by his side and led him to his forest kingdom. He took a measure of wheat, scattered it on the ground and called the pigeons. A huge flock of them descended, and every one looked like the other.

"Identify your son," said Oh. "If you're right, he's yours, if not, he's mine."

All of the pigeons were pecking at the wheat, except one which sat all by itself under a pear tree, ruffling and pruning its feathers.



"That's my son!"

"Well, you're right. That being so, you can have him."

Oh took the pigeon, tossed it from hand to hand, and lo! it turned into such a beautiful lad, so handsome the world had never seen the like before. The father was overjoyed, he embraced his son and kissed him, and both of them were glad to be reunited.

"Let's go home, son," said the father, and they left Oh's Kingdom.

On their way the father asked how he had fared at Oh's place, and the son told him about it in great detail. Then the father told him in what poverty he had been left to live the rest of his life, while the son listened.

"What shall we do now, son?" asked the father. "You're poor and I'm poor. You've been in service for three years, yet you haven't earned anything."

"Don't you worry, father, everything will be all right," he said. "See those noblemen fox hunting? I'll turn into a greyhound and run down the fox. The lords will want to buy me off you. Sell me for three hundred rubles, but without the collar, mind you. And we'll have money to live on."

As they walked on, they saw the hounds running after a fox. Just when it seemed they would get it, the fox escaped their fangs. In an instant the son turned into a hound, made chase after the fox and ran it down.

"Is that your hound?" asked the noblemen galloping out of the forest.

"Yes!"

"It's a good hound, sell it to us."

"You can buy it."

"How much do you want for it?"

"Three hundred rubles without the collar."

"We don't need that collar, we'll make him a gilded one. Take one hundred for your hound."

"No!"

"All right, here's your price, and give us the hound."

They counted out the money, took the hound and went on hunting. They turned the hound loose. It ran after another fox right into the forest; there it turned back into a man and rejoined the father.

"That bit of money won't help us much," said the father. "It'll be just enough to buy some odds and ends and repair the hut."

"Don't you worry, father, we'll get some more," said the son. "There will be some noblemen hunting quails with

a falcon in these parts. I'll turn into a falcon and they will want to buy me. Sell me for three hundred rubles as you did last time, but without the hood."

As they walked across a plain, they saw some noblemen casting a falcon after a quail. The falcon dashed hard to reach the quail, but every time the game eluded it. The son turned into a falcon and soon clawed the quail.

"Is that your falcon?" asked the noblemen who had seen it all.

"Yes."

"Sell it to us."

"Buy it if you like."

"How much do you want for it?"

"If you'll give me three hundred rubles it's yours, but without the hood."

"We'll make him a hood of brocade."

After a short bargain they gave him the money and let loose the falcon after another quail. The falcon flew straight to the forest, turned into a lad again and rejoined his father.

"Now we're sort of rich," said the father.

"You just wait and see how much more we'll have," said the son. "When we arrive at a fair, I'll turn into a stallion and you'll sell me. Ask for one thousand rubles, but don't sell the halter."

When they entered the town, they soon found themselves in the hustle and bustle of the fair. The son changed into a stallion, and what a stallion that was! — beautiful and mettlesome, a demon of a horse! As the father led it by the halter, it pranced gracefully and its hooves struck sparks from the ground. A throng of buyers surrounded them at once, and the bargain began.

"A thousand rubles and he's yours," said the man, "but without the halter."

"You can keep that halter," said the buyers. "We'll make him a silver one. Five hundred rubles for the horse. Is it a deal?"

"No," the man said, standing his ground.

Just then a Gypsy, blind of one eye, approached him.

"How much do you ask for that horse?"

"One thousand rubles without the halter."

"Eh, that's quite a pretty price you charge, man. I'll take him for five hundred together with the halter."

"No, no deal," said the man.

"All right, six hundred then!"

And a heated bargain followed. The Gypsy wrangled and

wrangled, but the man firmly held his own and the horse did not change hands.

"All right, man," said the Gypsy, "you've got the better of me, take one thousand for both horse and halter."

"No, Gypsy, the halter's mine!"

"Listen, man, when did you ever hear of buying a horse

without a halter? Why, I wouldn't be able even to lead it away..."

"Do whatever you like, but the halter's mine, and that's that," said the man.

"Listen, I'll pay an extra five rubles, only let me have the halter."

That halter isn't worth half a dozen coppers, and the Gypsy offers me five rubles for it, thought the man, and went and gave it away. Then they clinched the bargain with a drink, and the man went home with the money, while the Gypsy rode off. But that was not a Gypsy really, it was Oh who had changed himself into a Gypsy.

The stallion carried Oh on and on — higher than the trees and lower than the clouds. From the blue yonder they descend-

ed into the forest to Oh's Kingdom. Oh led the stallion into the stable and went into his cottage.

"That son of a dog didn't escape from me after all," he said to his wife.

At noontime Oh took the stallion by the halter and led it to a river to water. No sooner did the stallion reach for the water with its muzzle, than it turned into a perch and darted away. Oh, on his part, did not think twice and turned into a pike and gave chase to the perch. But when he caught up with it, the perch stuck out its spiky fins and turned its tail to the pike so it could not gobble it up.

"Perchy, dear little perchy," said the pike, "turn your head toward me so I might have a chat with you."

"If you want to have a chat with me," replied the perch, "I can pretty well hear you as I am."

And again the perch took off and the pike followed him in hot pursuit.

"Perchy, dear little perchy," said the pike whenever it came close enough, "turn your head toward me so I might have a chat with you!"

The perch, sticking out its bristling fins, said:

"If you want to have a chat with me I can pretty well hear you as I am!"

And again the perch took off. The chase went on for a long time, but the pike could not get the better of the perch.

Swimming close to the shore, the perch saw a Czarevna doing her wash. The perch changed itself into a garnet ring in a gold setting. The Czarevna noticed it and fished it out of the water.

Overjoyed at the find, she went home and said to her father:

"Take a look at the beautiful ring I've found."

As her father admired the ring, she tried to decide what finger to put it on, it was so beautiful!

Shortly after the Czar was informed that a foreign merchant was seeking his audience (in fact, that was Oh who had changed himself into a merchant). The Czar went to meet him.

"What do you want?" the Czar asked.

"You see," said Oh, "I was on a ship sailing home to my country, bringing a garnet ring to my King. But, unfortunately, it fell out of my hands into the water... Has anyone in your Czardom perchance found it?"

"Yes, my daughter found it," the Czar replied.

He called his daughter, and Oh started to beg and to plead with her to give him back his ring, saying that if he did not

bring it to his King it would be the end of him! But the Czarevna would not surrender the ring! Then the Czar himself intervened.

"Give that ring to the man," he said, "for he'll really be very unhappy on our account."

"You can have anything you ask for," pleaded Oh, "only give me back my ring."

"Since I can't keep it," said the Czarevna, "it shall be neither yours nor mine." And with these words she threw the ring hard on the floor. No sooner did it touch the floor it broke up into thousands of millet grains. In a trice Oh turned himself into a rooster and hastily started pecking up the grains. He pecked and he pecked till he had pecked them all. But one little millet grain had rolled under the Czarevna's foot, and that he did not see. After the rooster had cleared the whole floor of the grains, it took wing and flew out of the window.

The little millet seed turned into such a beautiful lad that the Czarevna fell in love with him right there and then, and implored the Czar and Czarina to give her in marriage to him.

"It's only with him that I'll be happy for the rest of my days," she said, so hard did she fall for him.

The Czar sat there frowning for a long time. How could he give his only daughter in marriage to a lad of low estate. He sought counsel, and then gave them his blessing. The whole world was invited to the great wedding feast. I was there, too, drank mead and wine, and what did not reach my mouth flowed down in streams along my beard — that's why it has turned so white.

In the meanwhile the little mice were singing and dancing and fooling around, happy at the thought that very soon there would be a gorgeous feast.

When the cookies were ready, the rooster took them out of the oven and put them on the table to cool. In a jiffy the mice were at the table, sniffing and twitching their whiskers — the rooster did not have to call them.

"Oh, am I hungry!" squeaked Twist.

"Me too, like a bear!" squeaked Turn.

And quickly they took their places at the table.

"Wait a minute!" said the rooster. "First of all, tell me who found the wheat-ear?"

"You did!" the mice exclaimed loudly.

"And who threshed it?" asked the rooster.

"You did," replied the mice in subdued voices.

"Who took it to the mill?"

"You did," whispered Twist and Turn.

"And who kneaded the dough? Who made the fire in the oven? Who baked the cookies?"

"You did all that," replied the mice under their breath.

"Now what did you do?"

What could the mice reply? Nothing. Slowly they crawled down from their stools, and the rooster did not even think of holding them. Why should he treat those lazybones to his lovely, crispy cookies?

Once upon a time the Lark was Czar over all the birds, and he had a Mouse for a wife, who was Czarina over the beasts. They had their own plot of land which they sowed with wheat. When harvest time came, they started to divide their yield between them. After the sharing, one grain was left over. Said the Mouse:

"Let it be mine."

To which the Lark replied:

"No, let it be mine."

They argued and argued about it. They should have sought counsel from someone superior to them, but there was no one whom they could ask for advice, for there was no one superior to them. So the Mouse said:

"Very well, if that's the case I'll bite the grain in two."

Czar Lark agreed to such an arrangement. But no sooner did the Mouse take the grain into her teeth than off she scampered into her hole. Czar Lark grew angry at such deceit and called all the birds to take vengeance on the Mouse, while the Mouse summoned all the beasts, and war broke out. Whenever the beasts swept into the woods to destroy the birds, the birds took to the trees and from there assailed the beasts, clawing and pecking them on the wing. Thus the battle raged the whole day, and by evening everyone went to rest. During the fray Czarina Mouse noticed that the ants had not joined battle, and she had them called to her. As they came crawling toward evening, she ordered them to climb the trees at night and nibble all the feathers off the birds' wings.

At dawn next day the Czarina commanded:

"Come on, all of you, to battle!"

As the birds began to rise, they helplessly fell to the ground where the beasts tore them to pieces. Thus Czarina Mouse defeated Czar Lark.

During the battle, however, one eagle saw that something was wrong and he did not fly from the tree. Presently an archer came by, and seeing the bird on its perch took an aim at it. But the eagle started to plead in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, good man, I might stand you in good stead."

The archer aimed a second time, and the eagle pleaded again:

"Do not kill me, better take me down and keep me and I shall stand you in good stead."

But the archer aimed the third time, and the eagle begged him most piteously:

"I beg of you not to kill me, kind man, but take me with you and I will stand you in good stead."

The archer took pity on the bird, climbed the tree, took the eagle down, and carried him to his home. And there the eagle said to him:

"Take me into your cottage and feed me with meat until my wings grow again."

Now, the man had two cows and one steer. He immediately slaughtered one of the cows and fed its meat to the eagle for a whole year. At the end of the year the eagle said:

"Let me loose so I may fly and see whether my wings have grown."

The man let him loose. The eagle swept into the sky and circled there till noon. When he returned, he said to the man:

"I have not enough strength yet, slaughter your other cow for me."

The man did as he was asked. The eagle fed on the meat for yet another year. Then again he soared into the sky and stayed there almost the whole day. By evening he returned and said to the man:

"Slaughter the steer for me as well."

The man was loath to do this, but finally he said:

"Be what may, I've lost more than that in my life."

And he went and slaughtered the steer. The eagle fed on the meat for another year, and when he flew into the sky he reached right up to the highest clouds.

Back on earth, he said to the man:

"I thank you greatly for what you have done for me; climb on my back and I will lift you up into the sky."

"Will it be safe for me?"

"Come, climb on my back!"

The man did so.

The eagle carried him up to the clouds and there he shook him off his back. Down went the man, but the eagle did not let him fall to the ground and clutched him with his claws in the air.

"What did you feel when you were falling?" he asked the man.

"I felt more dead than alive," he replied.

"That's exactly how I felt when you aimed at me that first time," said the eagle. "Now climb on my back again."

This was the least the man wanted to do, but he obeyed. The eagle carried him up and up, right into the clouds, and there he shook him off his back. The man went headlong down to the earth, but again the eagle caught him in the nick of time.

"What did you feel this time?" asked the eagle.

"I felt as if my bones were falling apart."

"That's exactly how I felt when you aimed at me the second time," said the eagle. "Now climb on my back once more."

The man did so. The eagle carried him up and up and up beyond the highest clouds, and there he shook him off his back. Down went the man, hurling like a stone, but the eagle scooped him up just before he touched ground.

"And what did you feel now?" asked the eagle.

"It was as if I had passed away altogether."

"That's exactly how I felt when you aimed at me the third time," said the eagle. "Now we are quits — you owe me nothing and I owe you nothing. So sit down on my back and I will fly you to my home."

They flew on and on till they came to the eagle's uncle.

"Go to my uncle," said the eagle, "and when he asks you whether you have seen his nephew, tell him you will bring him before his eyes if he gives you the magic egg."

So the man went to the eagle's uncle and the eagle's uncle asked him:

"Did you come willingly or unwillingly?"

"A good Cossack always comes of his own will," the man replied.

"Have you heard anything about my nephew? It's three years now he has gone to war, and we have not heard of him since..."

To which the man replied:

"If you give me the magic egg, I will bring him before your eyes."

"I'd rather never see him again than give you the magic egg," he was told.

When the man came back to the eagle, he said:

"Your uncle told me that he'd rather never see you again than give me the magic egg."

"All right," said the eagle, "let us fly further."

And they flew on and on till they came to the eagle's brother. There, too, the man replied to the query in the same manner, but the magic egg he did not get.

Then they flew to the eagle's father.

"Go to him," said the eagle, "and should he ask you about me, tell him that you know my whereabouts and will bring me before his eyes."

When the man came to the eagle's father, he was asked: "Did you come willingly or unwillingly?"

"A good Cossack always comes of his own will," replied the man.

"Have you seen our son perchance? It's the fourth summer since he's been gone. He went to war somewhere, and, maybe. he got killed there..."

"I have seen him," said the man. "But I will bring him before your eyes only if you give me the magic egg."

"What would you want the magic egg for?" the eagle's father asked. "I will give you money instead."

"I do not want any money," said the man. "I want the magic egg."

"All right, bring him here and you'll get what you ask."

When the man came back with the son, his parents were overjoyed, and gave the man the promised egg with the words:

"Take great care not to break it, and when you come home make sure to build a large enclosure around the egg before you break it."

The man took the egg and went home. On his way he grew thirsty. Presently he came to a well. He bent down to take a drink of water and as he did so the egg slipped out of his hand and broke against the side of the well. No sooner did this happen than herds of cattle started coming out of the egg. Hard as the man tried to round them up, he could not bring them together. He shouted and cried, but all in vain. Just then a She-Dragon appeared and said:

"What will you give me if I drive the herd back into the egg for you?"

"What do you want?" the man asked.

"Give me what has appeared in your home since you left it."

"All right, you can have it," said the man.

The She-Dragon drove the herd back into the egg, patched it up and gave it to him.

When the man came home, he was told that a son had been born to him. He was overcome with grief at this news, and when he told his wife what had befallen him, it nearly broke her heart.

But there was nothing for it: a promise was a promise.

The man built a large enclosure, broke the magic egg, let out the cattle into this enclosure, and from then on they lived a prosperous life.

When their son came of age, he said to his father:

"So it was you who promised me to the dragon. But, never mind, I'll find a way to stay alive."

And with these words he left home and went to the She-Dragon.

He came to her place and she said to him:

"If you perform three tasks for me, I will let you go in peace; if not, I will devour you."

Now, before the dragon's house there spread a large field, as wide as the eye could see.

Said the She-Dragon:

"In one night you must grub this field, plow it, sow it with wheat, reap the wheat and stack it. I want you to bake a loaf of bread from this wheat and have it ready by the time I awake in the morning."

With a sore heart the lad went to a pond nearby. Not far from the shore stood a stone pillar in which dwelled the bewitched daughter of the She-Dragon. He hugged the pillar and wept bitterly.

"Why do you weep, young lad?" asked the daughter of the She-Dragon.

"How can I help weeping, when the She-Dragon has set me a task I can never do, and she wants me to do it in one single night."

"What task?" asked the dragon's daughter.

He told her.

"If you promise to marry me I will do it for you."

He promised, and she said:

"Now, go lie down and sleep, and early in the morning you will bring her the loaf of bread."

The girl went to the field and whistled so loudly that the ground began to break up all by itself, and in one place it was being plowed, and in another sown with wheat. Before daybreak she baked a loaf of bread, gave it to the lad, and he took it to the She-Dragon and put it on her table.

The She-Dragon woke up, went out of her house and saw to her amazement that the field had been plowed and sown, the wheat reaped, and the sheaves neatly stacked on the stubble.

"You have coped with this task," she said to the boy. "Now, see that you perform the second task as well. Raze down that mountain yonder and let the Dnieper flow over it; build granaries on the bank so that merchant barques can berth alongside, and sell the wheat to these merchants. I want all this done by the time I get up early in the morning."

Again the lad went to the pillar and wept bitterly.

"Why are you weeping, young lad?" asked the dragon's daughter.

He told her everything the She-Dragon had ordered him to do, and the girl said:

"Go lie down and have some sleep, and I'll do everything for you."

She whistled so loudly that the mountain started to crumble, the Dnieper flowed over it, and granaries appeared on the banks. She woke the lad so he could go and sell the wheat to the merchants. When the She-Dragon rose in the morning she was amazed to see that the lad had done everything she had told him.

Then she set him the third task:

"This night I want you to get the golden hare for me and bring it to my house early in the morning."

Again the lad went to the pillar and wept bitterly.

"What task did she set you this time?" asked the dragon's daughter.

The lad told her.

"Oh, this time it's no joke," she said, "for no one knows for sure how to catch the golden hare! You know what, let's go to the cave in the hill over there. You stand right here by the cave, while I go in and chase the hare out. But mind you, whatever or whoever emerges from the cave, grab it, for it will be the golden hare!"

So she went into the cave and started to drive out everything that might be in there. Very soon a snake crawled out, and as it hissed at the lad he let it slip away. The girl came out of the cave and asked:

"Well, has anything come out of here?"

"Nothing much," answered the lad. "There was a snake, but I got scared lest it bite me and I let it go."

"Why, that was the very hare itself! Now look, I'll go in there once more, and when anyone comes out and tells you no golden hare is there do not believe him, but make a grab at him!"

She went into the cave again. Soon an old woman emerged and asked the lad:

"What are you looking for, son!"

"For the golden hare," he replied.

"Of all the places to look for it. There is no hare around, son," she said and went away.

Then the girl came out of the cave and asked:

"Well, hasn't the hare or anything else emerged from the cave?"

"No, nothing! There was only an old hag who asked me what I was looking for. I told her about the golden hare and she said that there was no such thing in this place, so I let her go!"

"Why didn't you seize her!" the girl cried. "That was the golden hare itself. Now we'll never catch it. The only thing left for me to do is turn into a hare and you will bring me to the She-Dragon. But mind you, don't give me into her hands, for otherwise she will recognize me and tear me and you to pieces."

Then the girl turned herself into a golden hare, and the lad took it and brought it to the She-Dragon. Putting the hare on the table, he said:

"Here you are, and now let me go."

"All right, you can go," said the She-Dragon.

When he left, the She-Dragon went out of the house for a while and that same instant the hare turned into a girl again and quickly joined the lad. Together they ran away from the dragon's palace as fast as they could. When the She-Dragon realized that the hare had been none other than her own daughter and that she had been fooled, she decided to hunt them down and destroy them. But she did not do this herself, and sent her husband instead. He gave chase to the girl and the lad. The earth trembled as he came hot on their heels. And the girl said:

"That's the dragon coming for us. I'll turn myself into wheat and you into an old man who will be guarding me. If he asks you whether a girl and a lad had passed this way tell him you did see them at the time this wheat was being sown."

Soon afterwards the dragon swooped down and asked:

"Did you see a girl and a lad pass this way?"

"Yes, I did," replied the old man.

"When was it?"

"They came by here when this wheat was being sown."

"What do you mean?" said the dragon. "This wheat is ripe for the sickle, whereas they disappeared but yesterday."

The dragon went home, while the wheat turned into a girl again and the old man into a young lad, and they took off as fast as they could.

The dragon came home, and his wife asked him:

"What, haven't you destroyed them or come across them?"

"No, I only met an old man guarding some wheat, and when I asked him whether a girl and a lad had passed by, he told me he did see them when the wheat was being sown. But how could it be, I wondered, seeing that the wheat was ripe for the sickle?"

"Why didn't you tear the old man and the wheat to pieces!" his wife yelled. "Those were the villains themselves. Now go once more and make sure you make short work of them!"

Off went the dragon, and the earth trembled as he pursued the fugitives.

"Oh my, the dragon is hot on our heels again!" said the girl. "I'll turn into an old monastery, so old it will be on the verge of crumbling to pieces, while you will be a monk. If he asks you whether you saw a girl and a lad pass by tell him you did at the time this monastery was being built."

Soon afterwards the dragon swooped down and asked the monk:

"Did you see a girl and a lad pass this way?"

"Yes, I did."

"When was it?"

"They came by here when this monastery was being built."

"How can that be?" said the dragon. "They disappeared but yesterday, and this monastery must have been built hundreds of years ago."

And with these words he flew away.

Back home, he said to his wife:

"I saw a monk walking by a monastery, and when I asked him about the girl and the lad, he told me he saw them at the time the monastery was being built. But this is impossible, for the monastery must have been built hundreds of years ago, while they disappeared but yesterday."

"Why didn't you tear the monk to pieces and raze that monastery?!" she yelled at him. "Those were the villains themselves. It seems I have to go myself and catch them."

So off she went and the earth rumbled and trembled in her wake.

"Oh my, of my!" cried the girl. "This time it's the She-Dragon herself flying to kill us. You know what, I'll turn you into a river and myself into a perch."

No sooner said than done.

The She-Dragon swooped down onto the river bank and said:

"So you think you'll get away from me, do you?"

Immediately she turned into a pike and gave chase to the perch. But whenever the pike caught up with the perch, the perch stuck out its bristling fins and the pike could not gobble it up. The pike chased the perch for a long time, but could not get hold of it. So in the end the pike decided to drink up all the water in the river. It drank and it drank till it had drunk so much that it burst.

Then the girl who had turned into a perch said to the lad whom she had turned into a river:

"There is no one we need be afraid of now. Let us go to your home. But when you enter the house and greet your relations and kiss them, mind you don't kiss your uncle's daughter for you will forget me and I will have to find another place to live in your village."

He entered his home and greeted all of his relations and kissed them, and then, afraid that they would hold it against him for not having greeted his uncle's daughter like the rest, he went and kissed her, and when he did so he forgot the first girl.

Half a year passed and the lad decided to marry. A match was made for him with a pretty girl, and when they became engaged he completely forgot the one who had saved his life.

On the evening before the wedding, all the village girls were invited to the bride's house to make *shishki* wedding cakes. The girl with whom the lad had once escaped death was also invited, although no one knew anything about her. The girl fashioned a cock-dove and a hen-dove out of the dough, put them on the floor, and there they became alive. The hen-dove started to speak to the cock-dove in a human voice:

"Have you forgotten how I grubbed the field for you, how I sowed it with wheat and baked a loaf of bread of that wheat, and how you took it to the She-Dragon?"

"I've forgotten, forgotten!" said the cock-dove.

"Have you forgotten how I razed the mountain and let the Dnieper flow over it so that the merchant barques could berth alongside the granaries on the bank, and how you sold the wheat to the merchants?" the hen-dove asked.

"I've forgotten, forgotten!" replied the cock-dove.

"And have you forgotten how we went after the golden hare and how you thought no more of me thereafter?" asked the hen-dove.

"I've forgotten, forgotten!" replied the cock-dove.

And there and then the lad remembered everything. So he left his bride-to-be and took the first girl for his wife, and they lived happily ever after.

ILYA MUROMETS AND NIGHTINGALE THE ROBBER

Ilya Muromets was born into a poor family near the town of Murom. His father and mother worked the little plot of land they owned by the forest which provided them with fuel in the cold months of winter. With the little they were able to grow on their small holding they fed their son who for thirty years could only sit or lie on the oven, because his legs were useless — he could not walk a step.

One day, when his father and mother had gone to the forest for brushwood, three old men came to the cottage door and called:

"Ilya, Ilya, open the door!"

"How can I possibly open the door?" he said. "My legs are so weak I cannot even stand on them."

"Come on, Ilya, you just make an effort and you'll get up!" they urged.

Ilya did as he was told, swung his legs down from the oven and jumped down onto the floor. He went straight to the door, opened it and let in the three old men.

"Listen, Ilya, you had a grave illness which you got over," they said. "From now on you will be happy, your mother and father will be happy, and you will be a healthy and strong man destined to become a famous hero."

Then they handed him a jug of water, saying:

"Here, drink this jug of water and you will see what hap pens to you next."

He took a deep draught.

"What do you feel?"

"I feel great strength pouring into my body."

"Good, now drink some more!"

He tipped the jug and took another draught.

"Well, and what do you feel now?"

"I feel so strong I could overturn the whole earth."

"That's very good, Ilya," said the three old men. "But do not boast of your strength nor tell anyone about it. We've given it to you so you might be a joy to your father and mother. Do not do any evil to anyone, but help the righteous and punish the evil-doers."

And with these words they left.

At that time the Tatars invaded the Rus lands. They had just laid siege to Kazan. Ilya Muromets set forth to Kazan which was beleaguered by the armies of three Tatar Kings. He pulled a large oak tree out of the ground and, charging into the thick of the enemy, swung it right and he swung it left, slaying the Tatars by the hundreds. He destroyed the whole Tatar army, sparing only the three Kings. And to them he said:

"Go to your Tatary and tell them never to come to the Rus lands again. I might have killed you as well, but I am leaving you alive so that you warn the others to stay away from here, for Ilya Muromets has appeared in the Rus lands and he will smite dead the lot of you."

When the Tatars retreated, Ilya Muromets entered the city. All the people had fled to the shelter of their homes and churches. As he went into one church, he saw it filled with men and women and children crying and praying to God.

"What are you doing here?" Ilya Muromets asked.

"The Tatars have besieged our city. They'll kill us all!"

"What Tatars?!" said Ilya. "There are no Tatars anymore, come out and see for yourselves."

When they saw that the enemy had disappeared, they were beside themselves with joy and begged Ilya Muromets to stay in their city.

"No, I cannot," he said. "I have freed you of the Tatars and must go and free the other places of them. There is nothing for

you to be afraid of now because they will never come to this land, and you can work in peace as you did before." With these words Ilya Muromets mounted his horse and rode off to Kiev.

Everyone went the long, roundabout way to Kiev, because the straight road was guarded by the strong and horrible Nightingale the Robber. No bird, no beast, no man did dare come near Nightingale the Robber because he killed anyone and anything trespassing his domains.

But Ilya Muromets took the straight road to Kiev which ran past the forest where Nightingale the Robber had made himself a perch on nine branches of three oaks. From here he could scan the forest from end to end. When anyone approached on foot or on horseback, his nightingale whistle made the leaves fall off the trees, and his roar of a wild beast uprooted the trees and killed every creature in sight.

When Nightingale the Robber saw Ilya Muromets, he took a deep breath and blew and the leaves fell off the trees, and when he roared Ilya's mount went down on its knees.

"Get up, or I'll throw you to the dogs," Ilya Muromets shouted to his horse. "Can you be afraid of Nightingale?!"

As Ilya came nearer, Nightingale the Robber pounced on him. But while he was in midflight, Ilya Muromets took aim and shot an arrow right into the Robber's right eye. The arrow passed through his head and Nightingale the Robber dropped to the ground. Ilya Muromets seized him at once and squashed him to the ground. Nightingale the Robber was drained of his strength and yielded to the strong grip of the knight.

Ilya took the sturdy leather straps of his stirrup, tied the Robber's hands and legs, roped him to the saddle, and thus made his way to the Robber's lair.

Now, Nightingale the Robber had a strong and vicious daughter. When she saw Ilya coming with her father roped to the saddle, she seized a large iron cudgel weighing some one hundred stone and hurdled it at Ilya Muromets, intending to kill him. But Ilya simply shrugged it aside with his shoulder and sent if flying straight back at the daughter. When it hit her, she dropped dead from the mighty blow.

The wife of Nightingale the Robber had seen what had just taken place and started to plead:

"Take anything you want, take as much silver and gold as you wish, only spare me my husband."

"No, this I cannot do," said Ilya Muromets. "He has killed too many people and orphaned too many children to go on living on this earth. I do not need your silver or gold. It is not wealth I seek, only justice."

He turned his horse round and galloped straight to Kiev.

Kiev was ruled by Prince Volodimir. When Ilya Muromets arrived in the city, the Prince was holding a great feast for his courtiers.

Ilya went to the Prince's palace and introduced himself to the Prince.

"By what road did you come?" Prince Volodimir asked.

"I took the straight road," Ilya answered. All the knights jumped to their feet, and one of the most esteemed heroes of Volodimir's court, Alyosha Popovich, said: "This is impossible. My Prince, that man is lying! Would anyone dare take the straight road, knowing that no bird, no beast, no man can pass Nightingale the Robber alive?"

"A fine hero you are if you're afraid of Nightingale the Robber," said Ilya Muromets in reply. "Come on, all of you, I will show him to you."

The Prince, followed by the Princess, his courtiers and heroes came out into the courtyard.

"There, take a look at Nightingale the Robber," said Ilya.

When they saw the Robber roped to the saddle, they at once acknowledged Ilya's great feat, for the one who could overpower the Robber and rope him to his saddle deserved to be a famed hero.

Then the Prince said to Nightingale the Robber:

"Whistle for us, Nightingale, and roar like a beast."

To which he replied:

"It is not you who took me prisoner, and you have no right to give orders to me. I'll take orders only from the one who overpowered me."

"Well, Ilya Muromets, make him do what I say," said the Prince.

Ilya took the Prince and Princess to his side and covered them with his cloak. "I'll shield you with my cloak lest your ear-drums burst when he starts to whistle," he said.

And to Nightingale the Robber he said:

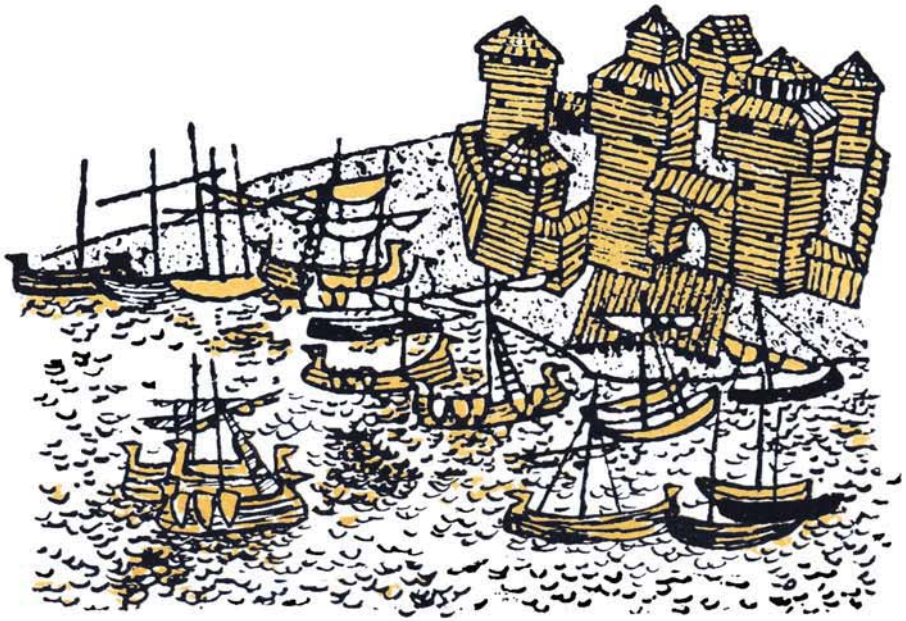
"Nightingale, whistle for us!"

When he started to whistle, the leaves were swept off the trees and all of the knights of Volodimir's court dropped to their knees from fright. And when the Robber roared like a beast, all the knights scrambled for their lives.

"Ha-ha-ha, that's how brave you are," said Ilya Muromets to the knights. "What would you have done if you were in my shoes?"

After that he took Nightingale into a field and chopped his head off.

Ilya Muromets was accepted to the court of Prince Volodimir. But very soon he was to find out how fickle was the favor of the mighty, especially of the princes. One day the knights gathered for a feast at the palace. As they wined and dined, they picked a quarrel with Ilya Muromets about some trifle. The knights schemed against him and incited the Prince to throw him into a dungeon. And the Prince yielded to their wiles. For three long years he did not send Ilya Muromets any food, thinking that by this time he would die of hunger.



But Volodimir's daughter was secretly supplying Ilya Muromets with food and everything else he needed.

Three years thus passed. One day the Prince received a letter from the Tatar King Kalin with the following message: "I, the Tatar King Kalin, have not enough lands for my subjects, and I want to annex your Kiev domains. If you refuse to surrender these lands to me voluntarily, I shall send my army and seize them, and you and your wife will carry water for my kitchen."

Prince Volodimir was alarmed and frightened by this letter, and sought counsel with his wife:

"What shall we do?"

Then he asked everyone what to do, his daughter included.

"Send for Ilya Muromets," she said. "Maybe he's still alive."

"Oh no, this is out of the question," said the Prince. "He's been in the dungeon for three years without any food or drink. His bones have probably fallen apart by now."

"Send for him nonetheless," his daughter insisted.

So the Prince said to his courtiers:

"Go and see whether Ilya Muromets is still alive."

When they came down into the dungeon, they saw Ilya Muromets, healthy of body and mind, singing a jolly tune.

They returned to the Prince and said:

"Ilya Muromets is alive as if nothing had happened to him."

"Is that true?" the Prince asked.

"Upon our word, Prince."

The Prince went down into the dungeon himself.

"Ilya, forgive me for the wrong I have done to you," he said. "You must help us in this terrible hour!"

"I will not lay down my life for you, Prince," said Ilya Muromets. "You threw me into this deep dungeon and deprived me of food and drink in the hope that I would die, and now you ask me to help you! Nothing doing!"

Then the Prince sent his wife.

And to her pleas, too, Ilya Muromets replied:

"I will not help you."

Then the daughter said:

"I'll go and ask him myself."

And to her entreaties Ilya Muromets replied:

"You have fed and sustained me. It is for our Rus land and for you that I fear, and so I will help you. Your father and mother should be proud of such a wonderful daughter."

Ilya Muromets swept down upon Kalin's army and destroyed almost all of it. King Kalin was a strong and mighty knight. When he saw that Ilya Muromets had routed his army, he started to fight him himself. For three days and three nights they fought a bitter hand-to-hand battle.

King Kalin seemed to have got the better of him. He threw Ilya Muromets onto the ground and gripped him firmly by the throat.

King Kalin was loath to kill him, he simply wanted to put fright into him. Drawing out his dagger, he said threateningly to Ilya:

"I'll rip your belly with this!"

And then he added:

"But I will spare your life if you marry one of my three beautiful daughters and live with me and defend me. What use are the Rus princes to you if you have to fight me singlehanded and they won't come to your assistance?"

Now, the three old men who had once put Ilya on his feet said: "Remember, Ilya, as long as you're on the Rus land you will draw your strength from it. As long as you lie on the Rus ground you will grow stronger and stronger."

As King Kalin kept him pinned to the ground, Ilya Muromets thought to himself: You can push me into the mud for as long as you like, I'll only get stronger and stronger.

"If you do not want to marry my daughter," King Kalin roared in the meanwhile, "I'll make short shrift of you!"

But Ilya just lay there not resisting, growing stronger and stronger with every minute. When he felt that enough strength had entered his body, up he went and grabbed King Kalin by the legs and threw him high into the air, some twenty feet above the ground. When Kalin dropped into the grass, he was more dead than alive. Ilya Muromets quickly seized him by the legs, and with the King's body he started to thrash the remainder of the Tatar army. He clubbed left and right, right and left till he had destroyed all the Tatars. After the fray, Ilya Muromets returned to Kiev, took the daughter of Prince Volodimir in marriage and lived happily ever after.

THE LITTLE SHEPHERD

Once upon a time there was a Little Shepherd. The only thing he knew from early childhood was tending and guarding the sheep. One day a large boulder weighing some twenty stone fell out of the sky onto the pasture. To while away the time, he played with the boulder: he would tie it to the lash of his whip and toss it high in the sky, then nap away the whole day. Only when he woke up would the boulder come flying back out of the sky and land with such force that it stuck deep in the ground. Or he would throw his coat on the grass and put the boulder on top so no one could steal the coat, for three strong men or more could not have moved the boulder an inch, however hard they tried.

"Oh, stop hauling that boulder around," his mother would scold him. "Why, it could ruin your health!"

But he did not care: he went on playing with it as if it were nothing at all. One day a dragon appeared in the land of the Czar, where the Little Shepherd lived. The dragon started picking up rocks that weighed about eighty stone each to build himself a palace, and demanded that the Czar give him his daughter. The Czar grew very frightened, and sent runners throughout all the land to find a knight strong enough to destroy the dragon. Well, they looked and they looked, but could not find one.

The Little Shepherd heard the news and went around boasting:

"I could kill that dragon with my whip."

The people went and told the Czar about it, and he sent for the Little Shepherd. When he was brought before the Czar, and the Czar saw the Little Shepherd was hardly more than a boy, he cried in surprise:

"How can you go around telling people such things! And you so little!"

"That doesn't mean a thing," said the Little Shepherd boldly.

So the Czar had to give him the two regiments of soldiers he asked for: one regiment of singers and one of musicians. The Little Shepherd had the troops line up and so commanded them you would think he had been in the army no less than twenty years. Seeing this, the Czar simply clasped his hands in amazement.

Now, some distance from the dragon's palace, the Little Shepherd ordered his regiments to stay behind.

"Keep watch here," he said. "If smoke comes out of the dragon's palace, that means I've finished him; but if there's fire you'll know he's killed me."

He left his troops and went on alone. The dragon was such a fierce and strong monster that he never let anyone come near his palace without spitting fire and reducing him to ashes. The instant he caught sight of the Little Shepherd, he belched forth a flame, but it did no harm to the Little Sepherd whatsoever.

"Now then," asked the dragon, "what brings you here, my boy? Have you come in peace, or to fight me?"

"I come not in peace, but to fight you."

"You know," said the dragon, "you'd better go and grow up a bit, and come back in three years."

"No," said the Little Shepherd. "I'm grown up enough as it is."

"Well, well," said the dragon. "And what will you fight me with?"

"With this here whip."

And tied to the lash of his whip was the large boulder.

"All right," said the dragon. "Come and hit me."

"Oh no, you hit me first."

The dragon had a large sword of steel some ten feet long. But when he hit the Little Shepherd the sword broke to pieces.

"You stand fast," said the Little Shepherd. "It's my turn now."

And — whack! — he hit the dragon so hard the monster crumbled into dust and smoke shot up into the sky.

Oh my, were the regiments happy! The musicians struck up a merry tune, the singers joined them with a jolly song and the Czar came out to meet the Little Shepherd. He took his arm and led him into the palace. Some years later, the Czar gave him his daughter in marriage and built a palace for the newlyweds, where they lived very happily.

But the rulers of the neighboring lands started to reproach the Czar for giving his only daughter in marriage to a bootless shepherd! The Czar himself was sorry for it, so he sent his runners throughout the land to find a strong knight who could do away with the Little Shepherd. Very soon he found two such men. After being given the arms they asked for, they went to the Little Shepherd. He was sitting at a table reading a book, when he was told the two men had come to fight him.

"What did you come for?" he asked, when they entered. "Have you come in peace, or to fight me?"

"Naturally," they replied, "we've come to fight you."

Then one of them swung his sword and hit the Little Shepherd's left shoulder so hard that the weapon broke to pieces. And the other hit him across the right shoulder — but it only cut through his shirt. Then the Little Shepherd stood up, took hold of them both, and clapped them together with such force that their bones fell to the floor with a clatter. Oh my, was the Little Shepherd angry at the Czar! He went to him and told him straight without any ceremony:

"Now you'll get the same!"

The Czar was scared out of his wits, and from then on he never dreamed of laying a finger on the Little Shepherd.

BORIS SON O'THREE

Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife. One day they went out to their field to gather in the harvest. They had a little child, and they left it in a cradle which they hung on a branch on the edge of a wood. As they were busy reaping, an eagle swooped down, stole the child and took it to its nest in the wood.

Now, there lived three brothers in this wood. As one of them came out of the cottage, he heard someone crying. He went to his brothers and said:

"There's a human voice I hear crying in the wood, let's go and see who it is!"

The brothers went into the wood and soon found an infant boy. They took him then to the priest to have him christened. On the way they discussed names, and in the end decided to call the boy Boris Son O'Three, because to every one of the three brothers he was dear like a son. Together they brought him up, and when he came of age, he said to them:

"Fathers, I want to leave you now and strike out on my own."

"What can we give you to take along with you, son?" they asked.

"There's nothing I want. Just give me a foal."

"But, son, what will you do with that foal? Take something else besides!"

"No," he said, "I want only the foal!"

"All right, take it then."

He took the foal and left. As he went along, he saw something glittering in the distance. He wished he could mount his horse and ride to the shining object (you see, he had walked for such a long time that he was very tired, but the foal was of no use to him — it was yet too young to ride).

"Don't worry, Boris Son O'Three," said the foal in a human voice. "Wait just a little, and I'll tell you when you can mount me."

They came up to the glittering object, and Boris Son O'Three saw that it was the feather of the Fire Bird. He wanted to pick it up, but the foal said:

"Don't touch it, it's not simply a feather, it's much more than that. If you pick it up, a great misfortune will befall you."

But he did not heed these words and took the feather. Soon they arrived at a Czar's palace. Boris Son O'Three asked the

Czar to take him on as groom. In the Czar's stables there were some horses fit only to cart manure, and these Boris Son O'Three was given to tend at night. He brushed them with the feather he had found, and they shone with an unbelievable radiance. Everyone gasped with admiration at the sight. The horses which the Czar used to ride before no longer satisfied him and he asked for the ones which usually carted manure. The Czar took a great liking to Boris Son O'Three, and once he asked him:

"You seem to know a secret how to tend horses, seeing that you have made these here look so smart and glossy. Do you?"

Boris Son O'Three swore that he knew of no secret. The other grooms started then to spy on him and soon reported to the Czar that he had a feather of the Fire Bird.

"He got that feather, and that means that he can get the Fire Bird as well," they said.

The Czar sent for him and asked:

"Is is true, Boris Son O'Three, that you have a feather of the Fire Bird?"

"Yes, it's true," he answered.

"Then get the Fire Bird for me," said the Czar. "And if you don't, my sword will fall and your head will roll."

Boris Son O'Three went to his foal and wept bitterly.

"What are you weeping about?" the foal asked.

"How can I help weeping when the Czar has set me a task I cannot carry out."

"I told you not to take that feather, but you didn't heed my words," said the foal. "Now, don't you worry. Go to the Czar and tell him to give you a quarter measure of *horilka* brandy and a quarter measure of peas, and ask for brandy of the best sort."

He went to the Czar and asked him for all this, and the Czar gladly complied with his request. Boris Son O'Three then went into the field and dug a deep hole as his foal had told him to do. Into the hole he put the peas and poured brandy over them. Presently the Fire Bird came a-flying and ate of the peas and drank of the brandy. Then the foal said to Boris Son O'Three:

"Now watch carefully, as soon as the Fire Bird drops on its back and trembles, grab hold of it."

He did as he was told and seized the bird, while it cried:

"Boris Son O'Three, it's not for you I was destined, but now by you I have been caught."

He brought the bird to the Czar, and the Czar was so overjoyed that he could not do enough for Boris Son O'Three.

From then on Boris Son O'Three became the best loved and

honored man at the Czar's court. But the courtiers were very envious and picked on him. They hated him so much that they began to plot and to scheme how to get rid of him. And to the Czar they said:

"The Fire Bird's all very well, but he could also get the Fair Maiden of the Sea for you if he wished."

The Czar sent for Boris Son O'Three and said:

"You got the feather of the Fire Bird, you got the Fire Bird, and now get me the Fair Maiden of the Sea. If you don't, my sword will fall and your head will roll."

Boris Son O'Three went to his horse and wept bitterly. The horse asked him:

"What are you weeping about now?"

"How can I help weeping when the Czar has set me a task which neither you nor I can carry out."

"What is it?"

"He told me to get the Fair Maiden of the Sea."

"Didn't I tell you not to take that feather or else a great misfortune would befall you?" said the horse. "Now, don't you worry. Go to the Czar and ask him for some snares and mirrors, and let him give you a thousand gowns and a large box."

He went to the Czar and the Czar gave him everything he asked for. Boris Son O'Three then went to the sea, placed the mirrors along the shore and hung up the gowns. Presently the beautiful maiden, Nastasia, came out of the sea, and tried on every gown and looked into every mirror, admiring her own beauty. When she was trying on the last gown, Boris Son O'Three seized her, and she cried out in despair:

"Boris Son O'Three, let me go, let me free, I'll reward you, I'll give you my wedding ring to make you happy."

But he would not let her go. So the maiden tore the twelve strings of pearl from her neck and threw them into the sea. He took her to the Czar, and the Czar was so overjoyed that he rewarded him lavishly. And again the courtiers were green with envy, and again they picked on him and took to scheming and plotting against him, telling the Czar that Boris Son O'Three knew everything that was going on in the world. But the Czar would not yield to their wiles. One day Nastasia said to Boris Son O'Three:

"Since you could get the Fire Bird, since you could capture me, get my twelve strings of pearl from the sea."

And the Czar added:

"If you don't, my sword will fall and your head will roll."

Boris Son O'Three went to his horse and wept bitterly, and the horse asked him:

"What are you weeping about now?"

"How can I help weeping when the Czar has set me a task which neither you nor I can carry out."

"What task?"

"I must find the twelve strings of pearl which Nastasia threw into the sea."

"Go to the Czar," said the horse, "and let him give you one hundred barrels of beef and one thousand men."

The Czar gave him everything he requested. Then the horse said:

"When you come to the sea, place the beef along the shore, and when the crabs come crawling to eat the meat, grab the white one — that'll be their Czar. They'll ask you to let him free, but don't you do that before they bring you all the strings of pearl."

He did as he was told. No sooner did the crabs crawl out of the sea, than he got hold of the white one. The crabs started to beg and to plead:

"Let him go, let him free, we'll do everything you wish."

And Boris Son O'Three said:

"Get me all the strings of pearl from the sea and then I'll let him go."

They hurried back into the sea, and soon brought forth first one, then another, and then all the twelve strings of pearl. He was about to let the white crab free, when the horse cried out:

"Don't let him go yet, there's one pearl missing!"

The crabs rushed into the search and came out with a pike which had swallowed the pearl. Boris Son O'Three opened its belly, took out the pearl, and let the white crab free.

He brought back the strings of pearl to the amazement of all. But Nastasia was not content and said to the Czar:

"Send him to the Sun and let him ask why once it rose so red and early and now so late and white?"

Boris Son O'Three again went to his horse and wept bitterly.

"What are you weeping about?" the horse asked. "Now, don't you worry, if we could carry out all those other tasks we'll somehow manage with this one as well."

Next day he set off on his journey. On his way he came across some watchmen guarding an orchard.

"Where are you bound for, Boris Son O'Three?" they asked.

"I'm off to the Sun to ask it why once it rose so red and early and now so late and white?"

"If you get there," they said, "remind the Sun of us, for

once it made this orchard bloom and bear fruit and feed the whole world, and now it can hardly sustain us."

He went on his way and came upon two shackled soldiers.

"Where are you bound for, Boris Son O'Three?" they asked.

"I'm off to the Sun to ask it why once it rose so red and early and now so late and white?"

"If you get there," they said, "remind the Sun of us and ask how much longer must we bear our shackles?"

He went on his way and came across a man and a woman chasing a pair of doves in an oak tree. And they asked where he was bound for. He told them. To which they said:

"If you get there, remind the Sun of us and ask how much longer must we chase these doves?"

"All right, I will," said Boris Son O'Three.

He went on and on, and met a taverner's wife pouring water from one well into another.

"Where are you bound for, Boris Son O'Three?" she asked.

He told her.

"Remind the Sun of me and ask how much longer must I go on pouring water from one well into the other?"

"All right, I will," he said.

He had gone very, very far, when he came upon a huge whale lying across the road. Everybody walked and rode over its back so that its ribs were shining white. The whale was terribly thirsty, but nobody would give it a drop of water and it only champed its mouth in misery.

"Where are you bound for, Boris Son O'Three?" asked the whale, and on hearing the answer said, "Remind the Sun of me, too, and ask how much longer will people go on walking and riding across my back?"

He went on further and further and came to a little cottage. It was already eventide when he entered it, and there he met an old, old woman.

"Where are you bound for, Boris Son O'Three?" she asked.

"I'm on my way to the Sun to ask it why once it rose so red and early and now so late and white?"

"You see, I'm the Sun's mother," said the old woman.

So Boris Son O'Three went and told her about everything that had happened during his journey:

"I came across two shackled soldiers. I saw a large orchard which once bore fruit and fed the whole world with it, while now it can hardly sustain the watchmen guarding it. I saw a man and woman chasing doves in an oak tree in vain. Then I came upon a taverner's wife pouring water from one well into another without any hope of ever finishing this job. Then I saw

a huge whale lying across the road and everyone was walking and riding over its back so that its ribs were shining white, and none would give the poor thing a drink of water."

The old woman heard him out attentively, then she gave him something to eat, and told him to hide before the Sun came home. At the close of day the Sun came home and went to bed. Early in the morning the old woman said to her son:

"You know, I had a very strange dream."

"What was it about, mother?" he asked.

"I dreamed of a large orchard which once bore fruit and fed the whole world, while now it can hardly sustain the watchmen guarding it."

"Yes, mother, there is such an orchard. Robbers have hidden their loot in the ground there, and when someone digs it up the orchard will bear fruit again."

"I had another dream too."

"What was it, mother?"

"I dreamed of two shackled soldiers."

"If those soldiers gave the loot hidden in the orchard to the poor, they would be set free."

"I had yet another dream."

"What was it, mother?"

"In my dream I saw a man and a woman hunting for a pair of doves in an oak tree, and all in vain."

"Yes, they'll be doing it till doomsday, for they cannot ever atone for their crime. When they were young, they killed two of their children."

"Then I had another dream."

"What was it?"

"Somewhere there's a taverner's wife pouring water from one well into another without any hope of ever finishing the job."

"Yes, there is such a woman. She's punished for cheating, and will be pouring the water over and over again to the end of time. When she was young, she cheated her customers by serving the beverages not in full measure."

"Oh yes, I had one more dream."

"What was it?"

"Somewhere there lies a whale and everyone walks and rides across its back."

"Yes, there is such a whale. If it were to cough up the shipload of people it had swallowed, it would go where it belonged."

"Then, there was yet another dream."

"What was it, mother?"

"That once you rose early and red, and now late and white."

"Yes, there was such a time. When my girl lived in the sea, I would rise early to see her emerge from the waters, I blushed at the sight and set at a late hour. But now she is gone, so I rise late and set white."

The Sun was amazed to hear his mother telling him about so many happenings in the world, which she had seen in her dreams. Before he left, he wrote down all the answers to her questions on a piece of paper and gave it to her. The Sun gone, the mother gave Boris Son O'Three something to eat again and handed him the piece of paper.

He set out on the return journey. As he came to the whale, the whale asked:

"Well, did you remind the Sun of me?"

"Yes, I did," said Boris Son O'Three. "Cough up the ship-load of people and you'll go where you belong."

The whale coughed up the ship, and as it did the roar was so terrible the very earth shook.

Boris Son O'Three went on his way and came upon the taverner's wife.

"Did you remind the Sun of me?" she asked.

"Yes, I did, and the Sun said that you will be pouring the water to the crack of doom."

"Well, in that case I needn't hurry."

He went on and met the man and woman chasing the doves.

"Did you remind the Sun of us?" they asked.

"Yes, I did, and the Sun said that you will be chasing the doves till doomsday."

"Oh, we'll take it easy then, for every time we have a feeling that we'll catch those doves any minute."

He went on and came upon the two shackled soldiers.

"Well, did you remind the Sun of us?" they asked.

"Yes, I did, and the Sun said that if you give the loot hidden in the orchard to the poor, you'll be free."

They promised to do so and the same instant the shackles fell off their feet and they went away.

In the end he met the watchmen, and they asked whether he had reminded the Sun of them.

"Yes, I did, and the Sun said that as soon as the robbers' loot buried in the orchard has been unearthed, the orchard will bear fruit as of old."

They unearthed the loot, and the trees broke into bloom again.

Boris Son O'Three came back to the Czar's palace. He told him everything he found out and gave him the note written by the Sun. Thereupon the Czar rewarded him with half of his Czardom and they lived happily ever after like two brothers.

THE GOLDEN SLIPPER

Once upon a time there lived a man and a woman, and they had but one daughter. The mother was beautiful, but the daughter was even sweeter. When the girl was only a child, her mother fell gravely ill. As she lay on her deathbed, she called her daughter to her side and whispered into her ear:

"Here, take this little seed, my love, but don't tell anyone that you have it. Should any misfortune befall you, plant the seed and a beautiful willow tree will grow therefrom. If there is anything you need, go to the willow and you'll have it."

After the man had buried his wife and recovered from his grief, he married a widow who brought her own daughter into the family.

The stepmother treated her own child kindly, but hated her stepdaughter viciously. Her own daughter was such a lazy thing! She would not spin, she would not brew, she just sat idling the whole day through. Her stepsister, however, was an industrious girl, ready to help, ready to do as much as she was ordered to.

But whatever she did could not satisfy her stepmother. No matter how well she did her work the woman always snapped at her and even beat her. Slaving from morn till night, the poor girl had no time even to make herself a new shirt, and the clothes she had made during her mother's lifetime had been taken away by the stepmother for her own daughter. She went about in such rags that people laughed and poked fun at her. But she took the offense wordlessly and wept stealthily, which made her stepmother all the angrier, for the vicious woman could not stand her meekness and seized the slightest opportunity to pick on her. Still, the girl did what she was told as diligently as ever.

One day her stepmother told her:

"Take the calf to the pasture, and so that you won't sit twiddling your thumbs, here's a bundle of flax, and see that you strip it, and scutch it, and bleach it, and spin it, and bring it home as linen! And mind you do everything I told you!"

The girl took the flax and drove the calf to the pasture. While it grazed there peacefully, she wept bitterly because how was it possible to do all the things in one day! All of a sudden she remembered that she had the seed her mother had given her.

She went and planted it in the meadow, watered it, and again took to weeping. She cried and cried till she fell asleep.

When she awoke, she saw that the seed had grown into a beautiful willow tree, and beside it there was a little spring with water cold and crystal-clear. She went up to the willow tree and said:

"Open up, Oh willow tree, your lady Hanna's come!"

The tree opened and a bevy of girls emerged therefrom.

"Our dear lady, our sweet lady, what are your commands?"

And she answered:

"Here's a bundle of flax. Strip it, and scutch it, and bleach it, and spin it into cloth."

"Everything will be done as you say, our lady," said the girls and disappeared in the willow tree.

The girl pastured the calf till eventide and again went to the willow.

"Open up, Oh willow tree, your lady Hanna's come!"

Thereupon the tree opened and the girls brought her a length of fine white linen that would be fit for the most beautiful shirt. The girl took the linen, drove the calf home, and gave her stepmother the cloth. Seeing that the girl had fulfilled her task, the woman gritted her teeth in anger.

The next day she asked her own daughter to take the calf to pasture, and added:

"Here, daughter dear, take this little bundle of flax with you and spin it into cloth. If you don't manage, at least bring the flax home."

Her daughter drove the calf to the pasture. There she threw the bundle of flax aside as she had no intention of spinning, and in the evening returned home empty-handed.

"Mother, I had such a terrible headache the whole day that I couldn't do a thing," she lied.

"Never mind, my child, lie down and have a rest."

When Sunday came around, the woman dressed her daughter in her holiday best and they went to church. To her stepdaughter she snapped:

"Look after the fire, you lazy slouch, and get the dinner ready, tidy up the house, and make a shirt out of that linen by the time we come back from church. Mind you, if you don't get all that done, it'll be the end of you!"

When they left the house, the girl quickly made a fire in the oven, got the dinner ready, tidied up the house, and hastened to the willow.

"Open up, Oh willow tree, your lady Hanna's come!"

The tree opened and a bevy of girls emerged therefrom.

"Our dear lady, our sweet lady, what are your commands?"

"Make a shirt out of this linen by the time church is over, and dress me in fine clothes, for I want to go to mass."

Immediately she was dressed in beautiful garments, the girls put on a pair of little golden slippers on her feet, and a carriage drawn by a fine pair of horses was there to take her to church.

When she entered the church, it seemed to light up with a wonderful radiance. The congregation could not contain their astonishment and oh-ed and ah-ed. "Could she be a Princess or a Queen?" they wondered. "We have never seen the like before!" Now, a Prince happened to be in the church and when he saw the maiden, he could not take his eyes off her. When service was over, she was the first to leave. She drove up to the willow, hastily took off her fine garments, put on her rags and took the ready shirt... The horses pulled the carriage into the willow, while the girl returned to the house and sat down to wait for the family to come home from church.

When they returned, the stepmother asked?

"Have you made the dinner?"

"Yes, I have," replied the girl.

"And what about the shirt?"

"I've done it as well."

The woman only shrugged her shoulders in wonder, and said:

"Well, let's get down to dinner then."

At the table all they talked about was the fine young lady and the young Prince who was so taken with her that he even forgot to say his prayers.

"What did she look like?" asked Hanna. "Did she in any way resemble me?"

The woman's own daughter burst into laughter, while the stepmother flared up:

"Why, you dirty uncouth slut! How dare you compare yourself with such a fine lady?"

When next Sunday came around, the old man, the woman and her own daughter went to church, leaving the poor girl to do the chores again. She did them quickly and ran to the willow.

"Open up, Oh willow tree, your lady Hanna's come!"

The tree opened and a bevy of girls emerged therefrom.

"Our dear lady, our sweet lady, what are your commands?"

She wished to be dressed in costly garments and golden slippers, and then left for church.

The young Prince was already there, waiting for her. When

she entered the church, it seemed to light up with a wonderful radiance. The congregation whispered, amazed, "Heavens above, what a beauty! Who is she?" But nobody knew. And all the while the young Prince could not take his eyes off her... When service was over, she was the first to leave. Back at the willow, she took off her fine clothes, slipped into her old rags, and hurried back to the house to wait for everyone to come home.

At the table they talked about the one and the same thing — the fine young lady and the Prince:

"The young Prince was handsome, but the young lady was even better."

"Did she in any way resemble me?" asked Hanna.

At that the stepmother's daughter burst into loud laughter, while the woman got so mad she nearly beat up Hanna. She hated her so much that she could kill her.

The next day the Prince asked everybody who the lady might be. But nobody could tell him. He kept on asking.

"I know how to find her," a lad said to him.

"How?" asked the Prince.

"Put some pitch on the spot where she always stands in church, and her slipper will get stuck in it," he said.

And that's what they did. On the third Sunday the young lady again appeared in church and took up her usual place, while the Prince and his suite were all eyes watching her... When service was over, she made to leave at once, but she could not move. She pulled and she pulled till she freed her feet at last, but in the haste she left one slipper behind.

When Hanna's parents came back from church, they kept gossiping about the slipper, and how small it was, and how it could not possibly fit anyone in the whole land.

"Maybe that slipper will fit my foot?" asked Hanna.

What a to-do there was when she uttered those words. The stepmother and her daughter fairly pounced at the girl:

"You dirty little slob, the only thing you're good for is digging in the cinders. Why, your feet are more like a pair of crooked logs."

Then Hanna was treated to a cruel beating and driven out of the house.

The Prince kept on inquiring who had lost the golden slipper, but nobody knew.

"I know how to find its owner, Prince," a lad said to him.

"How?"

"Let all the maidens try the slipper on, and the one it fits will be its owner," replied the lad.

So the Prince sent his men to the houses of the nobles. Heavens, how all the maidens wanted the slipper to fit so they might marry the Prince! But to no avail!... Then the Prince's men went around the houses of the merchants and townsfolk. But there, too, they did not fare any better! Then they had to go to the peasants' huts.

At last they came to the house where Hanna lived. Seeing them coming up to the house, the stepmother said to her own daughter:

"Go, my dear, and quickly wash your feet, for these gentlemen have come for you to try on the slipper!"

But to Hanna she said:

"As for you, you had better get out of my sight and hide behind the oven..."

The Prince's men entered the house.

"Hail to you!" they said.

"May God give you health, gentlemen!" replied the woman.

"Have you a daughter?"

"Oh yes, I have a daughter," said the woman. "My dear daughter!" she called, "come and try on the slipper. That's a good girl. Look at her nice white feet, gentlemen."

The daughter tried on the slipper, but her feet were much too big for it.

As Hanna watched from behind the oven, she was noticed by one of the Prince's men.

"Who is that girl?" he asked.

"Oh, that's not a girl," said the woman. "That's a lazy, dirty slut. How dare you come out when I told you to stay out of sight!"

"No, woman, let her come and try on the slipper."

The girl came forward and put on the slipper and there was no struggling and squeezing, for it fit her exactly.

"Well, woman, we'll have to take the girl along with us." said the Prince's men.

"You mean to say that you have chosen this scarecrow to be the Prince's bride? It will never be while I'm alive!"

"No, woman, she is coming with us!"

The stepmother started to rant and to rave, screaming that the slut had never known what tidiness was and had never been in a clean shirt.

But the courtiers would not listen to her.

"Wait a little, please, while I go and dress myself," said the girl, and ran to the willow tree.

"Open up, Oh willow tree, your lady Hanna's come." The tree opened and the bevy of girls emerged therefrom. She put on her finery and came back to the house looking so lovely that everyone was dazzled.

"Now let me put on the other slipper, too," she said.

The courtiers led her to the carriage and drove off to the Prince's palace. A great wedding feast was held, and the bride and groom lived happily ever after. As to the willow tree and spring, they disappeared under the surface of the earth and re-emerged in the Prince's garden.

THE POOR MAN AND THE RAVEN CZAR

Ukrainian Folk Tale from Verkhovina *

Once upon a time, somewhere or other, there lived a poor man. All he owned in the world was a small hut, a small plot of land, and a pair of shaggy oxen. Oh yes, I almost forgot. Besides this, he also had a wife and a brood of children. He himself did not know how many of them there were in his small hut, always crying and screaming for something to eat.

One day the poor man took his youngest son and the oxen to his small plot of land to plow it.

He plowed and he plowed, and before he had even finished plowing the second furrow, clouds suddenly gathered in the sky and it became dark as night.

The man looked up into the sky at the dark clouds and saw a huge black bird. Its beak was sharp like a red-hot spearhead, its talons were like hooks, and its wings were so wide they screened the sun.

The man was frightened at the sight of the bird hovering over his plot of land. The shadow cast by its wings covered not only him, but also his son, the shaggy oxen and the plow.

The man was even more frightened when he heard the bird say in a human voice:

"Tell me, man, what shall I take from you, your son or your oxen for my children who are very hungry?"

"Take me," said the man. "I'm old and I've had all the misery I want."

"No, I won't take you," said the horrible bird. "You've smoked too much tobacco and your meat has been cured in smoke to the marrow, it will only make my children ill! Let me have your son or your shaggy oxen."

The man fell to thinking what he should do. He had so many children, and if he sacrificied one there would be enough of them left anyway. But this pair of oxen was all he had, and if the bird took them away what would he plow his plot with, how would he keep his family provided with fuel and bread?

"Hurry up, will you," the bird pressed him. "Don't think too long, and tell me quick which of them you'll give me."

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* *Verkhovina* — lit. the Highlands, folk name of mountainous area (chiefly in use in the Ukrainian Carpathians) comprised of the drainage divide in the upper reaches of the rivers Striy, Dniester, Uzh and Latoritsya (Tr.)

Saying this, the bird started scraping the ground impatiently with its talons. At the sight of those horrible hooks, the man felt sorry for his son. No, not on my life, he thought, I won't give my son into those terrible claws.

"All right, take the oxen!" said the man sadly.

"It's your luck that you decided to give me the oxen and not the boy," said the bird. "If you had not I would have finished off the oxen and you, too, just the same. I want you to know that I'll pay a good price for your oxen. Send any of your sons to my palace and I'll give him anything he asks for."

"And where is your palace?" the man asked.

"Your sons will find my palace on a silver glade beyond green mountain meadows, beyond dense forests. Let him ask where the Raven Czar lives." And with these words he picked up the shaggy oxen and the plow with his claws and flew away.

The man came home broken-hearted.

"Where are the oxen?" asked his wife.

He told her what had happened to him, and hearing about the loss of the oxen she cried in despair:

"Oh Lord, what will become of us now! What hope have we of a harvest when you haven't plowed our plot and sown it with wheat?"

"Don't cry, Mother," said the eldest. 'I'll go to the Raven Czar and make him pay for the oxen. And if I don't come back there'll be an extra crust of bread for the others."

The mother wept even more bitterly at these words.

"Don't go, son, don't go!" she implored. "That terrible bird won't spare you. Never mind, we'll pull through somehow!"

But the boy would not listen to her. So she baked him a loaf of bread, put an onion into his bag, and saw him off on his long journey.

He set out to seek beyond the green mountain meadows and dense forests the palace on the silver glade where the Raven Czar dwelt.

He crossed one meadow, he crossed another meadow, and reached a dense forest. He grew very hungry by that time, so he sat down under a shrub, took out the loaf of bread and onion from his bag, and started to eat.

He had not yet made the first bit, when a limping crow came up to him, skipping and hopping on one leg.

"Good luck to you!" said the crow.

"And good luck to you!" the boy replied.

The crow sat beside the boy and watched him munching on his bread and onion.

"I'm so hungry. Could you give me a morsel of bread?" said the crow.

"Go find something to eat, I'm hungry and I've got a long journey ahead of me, so there's nothing I can give you," said the boy. He was hardhearted and miserly.

"Where are you bound for?" asked the crow.

"I'm looking for the Raven Czar's palace on the silver glade."

"Take me on your shoulder, for I'm in a hurry to get there myself. You see, my wings and legs won't serve me any longer. I'll show you the way."

"How can I carry you when I'm so tired I can barely drag my legs," said the boy indifferently.

The limping crow hopped up, flapped its wings, went up into the air, and flew away.

"How do you like that sly one, wanted to take a free ride on my shoulder!" said the boy angrily. He dropped the rest of the loaf into his bag and set forth to look for the silver glade and the palace of the Raven Czar. But neither the silver glade, nor the palace did he find. He lost his way in the forest and could not get out of it hard as he tried.

In the meanwhile his parents waited for him night and day, and when they abandoned all hope of ever seeing him again, the middle son said:

"Mother, bake me a loaf of bread and put it into my bag together with an onion. I'll go and look for my brother. Perchance I will find the silver glade and the Raven Czar's palace."

"Don't go, son!" his mother implored. "We will pull through somehow even without the reward of the Raven Czar. Maybe fate will be kind to your brother and he will come back safe and sound."

But she could not persuade him to stay. So preparations were made to see off the middle son on the journey.

He crossed green mountain meadows and dense forests. As he went along, he saw crows circling in the sky and thought that any minute now he would come upon the palace of the Raven Czar or his brother.

In the dense forest he grew very hungry, sat down, and taking out the loaf of bread and onion from his bag, began to eat. All of a sudden there appeared a limping crow before him and begged for a morsel of bread.

"Your Czar has taken our oxen away from us, so let him feed you," said the middle son.

"Take me on your shoulder then, so that I, limping and hungry as I am, shall not perish in this forest," the crow pleaded.

"Let your Czar take you on his shoulder," the boy said.

The crow hopped up, flapped its wings, and flew away.

The middle son followed the crow's flight in surprise, got up on his feet and set forth on his journey. But neither the silver glade, nor the palace of the Raven Czar did he find. He lost his way in the forest and could not get out of it.

In vain did the parents wait for their sons — there was no sight or sound of them.

So the youngest son said to his mother:

"Mother, get a bag ready for me, too. Maybe I will bring back the Czar's reward together with my brothers."

The poor woman fell to weeping and begged him not to go. But to no avail. She had to see him off as well.

The youngest son crossed high mountain meadows and dense forests. He sat down by the same shrub his brothers had sat under and began to eat. As he was about to start on his second piece of bread, a limping crow came up to him, skipping and hopping on one leg.

"Give me a morsel," the crow said.

The boy quickly sliced off a large piece and gave it to the crow, saying:

"Here you are! There's plenty left for me, and, besides, I like eating in company."

"Could you give me a bit of your onion?" the crow asked.

"Why, of course, help yourself."

The crow ate of the bread and onion, thanked the boy nicely, and inquired:

"Where are you bound for? Do you know that you've entered a forest from which not a living creature has ever yet found its way out?"

"I have to find the silver glade with the Raven Czar's palace," said the boy. "Perhaps my brothers are there, too."

"Take me on your shoulder, for I can't step on my feet and my wings are so weak!" the crow begged.

"All right, why not? But, mind you, I've never carried a crow on my shoulder before," said the boy with a smile, and set the crow on his shoulder.

They set forth on their journey. Perched on the boy's shoulder, the crow told him the way, whispering from time to time into his ear:

"Turn right, now left. And now go straight ahead."

And thus they walked for two days and two nights. They went through one dense forest, and then through another one. All of a sudden it grew lighter and they came upon a large glade. And what a glade that was! The grass, the flowers, and even the stones on it — all were of pure silver.

In the middle of the glade rose a steep rock, also of silver, and on top of it stood a beautiful palace.

The boy stopped in amazement. He had never seen anything so beautiful even in his dreams. He and the crow sat down by the edge of the glade and ate all that remained of the food.

Then the crow said:

"There, on top of the rock, stands the palace of my Czar. You'll find your way there yourself. And for your kindness to

me, I'll give you a piece of advice. If the Czar asks you what reward you want for your oxen, tell him all you will accept is the thing he puts under his head every night as he goes to bed."

And with these words the crow flew away.

The poor man's son climbed to the peak of the high rock. Here he was met by guards who escorted him right to the silver throne of the Raven Czar.

"How did you find your way to my palace?" the Raven Czar asked the boy.

"Good people have shown me the way," the boy replied. He did not want to give away the limping crow.

"Well, since you have found me I'll have to keep my word. Take a look around all my chambers, and the things you like best in them I will give to you."

For three days and three nights the boy walked through the Czar's chambers, but he had not been through even a tenth part of the palace. So he came to the Raven Czar and said:

"Czar, your chambers are marvelous indeed. I have seen many beautiful things and I liked many of them. But what shall I do with all that wealth? I shall not walk your chambers anymore. All I ask of you is the thing you put under your head when you go to bed."

At this the Raven Czar flew into a rage and ordered that the heads of all the crows who had accompanied the boy through the palace be chopped off.

"One of them has betrayed me!" he raved.

"I'll give you everything I have in my chambers!" said the Raven Czar.

But the boy stood firm.

So what could the Raven Czar do? He took out from under his pillow a little coffee mill and gave it to the boy.

"Here you are! Now get out of my sight lest I peck you to death!" he screamed in a fury.

The frightened boy dropped the coffee mill into his bag and made off as fast as he could. He stopped running only after he had reached the dense forest again.

He sat down, took out the mill, placed it before him, and started to rummage in his bag for something to eat. But the bag was empty.

The crow gave me a bad piece of advice, I should have taken some of the Raven Czar's riches, he thought to himself.

He examined the mill carefully, wondering why the Czar had been ready to sacrifice all his riches for it — and found nothing so peculiar about this mill.

"I'll die of hunger here!" he said with a low heart. "Wouldn't it be lovely if a table appeared before me, laden with food and drink just like the one in the chambers of the Raven Czar!"

As he said this, he lightly turned the handle of the mill... and lo and behold! in front of him there appeared a table served with all kinds of delicious food.

"Hey, I didn't know my little mill could do that!" he exclaimed in joy.

But then he grew sad again. How could he enjoy the food and drink all by himself when his father, mother, sisters and brothers were hungry?

He turned the mill handle once again and said:

"Let all my brothers and sisters and my parents be here at once!"

And that same instant all his dear ones — his father and mother, brothers and sisters — appeared at the table.

They ate to their hearts' content and did not leave the table until they had eaten everything. Then they all went home, happy and gay, and lived in plenty for many a day. Whatever they wanted, whatever they wished, the mill produced for them.

Now, if you don't believe me, you may go and ask them yourself. If they are willing, they will tell you everything.

THE POOR MAN AND HIS SONS

*Transcarpathian * Folk Tale*

Once there lived a poor man who had three sons. The eldest was called Petro, the second Havrilo, and the youngest Ivan.

When the boys had grown up, the father called them to his side and said:

"I've become old, my children, and can no longer take care of you. You're old enough to go out into the world and fend for yourselves. I'll be expecting you back in a year's time. The one who has earned the most will stay with me to the end of my days."

The sons left home, and soon each found himself some work.

After a year the eldest son returned with lots of money; the next day the second son arrived with some lumps of gold; and the following day the youngest son came home — empty-handed.

The father got angry with him and turned him out of the house. The poor lad went into the wide, wide world. He walked and he walked till night descended. He entered a dark forest, sat down on a stump, took out the last crust of bread he had brought from home and began chewing it, pondering over where he could go and what he could do. He was so lost in thought that he did not notice a giant appear in front of him.

"What preys on your heart, my lad?" asked the giant.

Ivan told him everything.

"You can enter my service if you like," proposed the giant.

Ivan agreed and followed his new master. They walked to the heart of the dense forest where the giant had a cottage for his home, and there Ivan settled down.

He lived well. There was not much work to do. The giant taught him how to ride a horse and wield a sword. He also taught his servant to read, write and count.

A year passed in this manner. Then one day the giant came home and said:

"Ivan, saddle your horse, take your sword and ride to the south. There, beyond two mountains, you will find a black castle surrounded by a black wall. In this castle lives a black vampire whom you must destroy."

The lad prepared for the journey, bid farewell to the giant and rode to the south.

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* *Transcarpathia* — historical name of the present Transcarpathian Region in western Ukraine (Tr.).

At last, after riding for three days, he saw the sinister black castle surrounded by a black wall. Ivan made his way into the courtyard and there he saw the vampire sitting with an iron club in his hands.

The vampire demanded in a horrible voice:

"What do you want here? How dare you tread upon my land?"

"I've come to fight you!" replied Ivan.

The vampire burst into a hideous roar of laughter and hurled the iron club at the lad. Ivan ducked, and the club flew past him. Then he picked it up, swung it and hit the vampire so hard that he dropped dead to the ground felled by the mighty blow. Ivan entered the black castle and found a black horse in black harness there. He jumped on the black horse, tied his own to the saddle, and set off for home.

The giant had already been waiting for Ivan. When he saw his servant safe and sound, he praised him and took the horse to the stable.

Time passed. Ivan was growing wiser and hardier. One day the giant called him and said:

"Now you must ride to the north. When you pass the impenetrable forests and the impassable swamps, you will see a red castle. In that castle lives a red vampire who has done much harm to the people. You must destroy him. When the vampire dies, the swamps will dry up and the people will be able to sow wheat on them."

Ivan wasted no time and rode to the north the very next day.

He rode and he rode until he entered a dense, impenetrable forest. He could hardly make his way through, so he took out his sword and began hacking himself a path. He hacked and he cut until nightfall, and was thus forced to spend the night there. Hobbling his horse lest it should stray away, Ivan lay down on the moss and was soon fast asleep.

But he did not sleep long. When he woke up, he saw that the trees around him had retreated. The landscape glowed with a miraculous light and the ground was carpeted with fragrant flowers. In the trees birds were singing in a way Ivan had never heard before.

Attracted by the sounds, the nymphs came out of the forest and the water goblins crawled out of the lakes to join together in merry dances and songs. All kinds of animals gathered around them, and none of the stronger attacked the weaker ones. Sitting on a bough over Ivan's head was an old owl by whose side a little turtle-dove snuggled. The owl was telling her something and she was listening very attentively.

Ivan, too, gave an ear to the owl's story, from which he learned that the forest had been bewitched, and everything in it was dead. It was only with his coming and hacking his way to its heart that everything came back to life. That was why the birds and animals were so overjoyed.

Ivan looked with wonder at the things he saw, and again he fell asleep. Awakening at dawn he looked around and saw that he was lying on the edge of the forest, and before him spread a great field covered with fragrant flowers.

Why, the swamps have dried up, he thought. I must hurry to finish off the vampire.

Ivan mounted his horse and galloped away. It was not long before he saw the red castle with the red wall. He flew into the courtyard and at once came face to face with the red vampire who was already waiting for him.

They started to fight. The vampire was soon drained of his strength, and Ivan killed him. He entered the red castle

and found a red horse in red harness there. Taking it along with him, he hurried home.

On his way he saw people in the fields, plowing and haying. Ivan felt happy at the sight and spurred his horse on to tell the good news to his master.

The master was happy to see Ivan safe and sound. He took the horse and harness and told him to have a good rest.

But Ivan did not rest for long, because he had to go to the west to do away with the white vampire. This time he had to ride through arid steppes and hot deserts. Huge snakes, threatening his life, blocked his way. Monstrous spiders fell upon him, trying to entangle him in their webs, and visions and phantoms tried to divert him from his path. He saw lakes and rivers, but whenever he approached them to quench his thirst they moved away no matter how hard he tried to reach them.

Ivan decided to head directly westward, not turning from the road, and so he did. At last he came to a huge white castle enclosed by a white wall. Here Ivan fought his toughest battle ever. But he overpowered the white vampire too, took away his white horse and harness and sped home.

On his way Ivan saw that the deserts were in bloom. Brooks bubbled in the deep gullies, the lakes, filled with water, glistened in the sun, and birds were singing in the trees.

Ivan came home, gave the horse and harness to the giant, and went to rest. After a good rest he took to his studies and learned many a new thing.

But all the time he wondered: why did his master who was so strong and so wise send him to slay the vampires instead of doing it himself? One day he asked the giant:

"Please don't be angry with me for asking, but why did you, such a strong and clever man, keep sending me to kill the vampires instead of fighting them yourself?"

The giant smiled and answered:

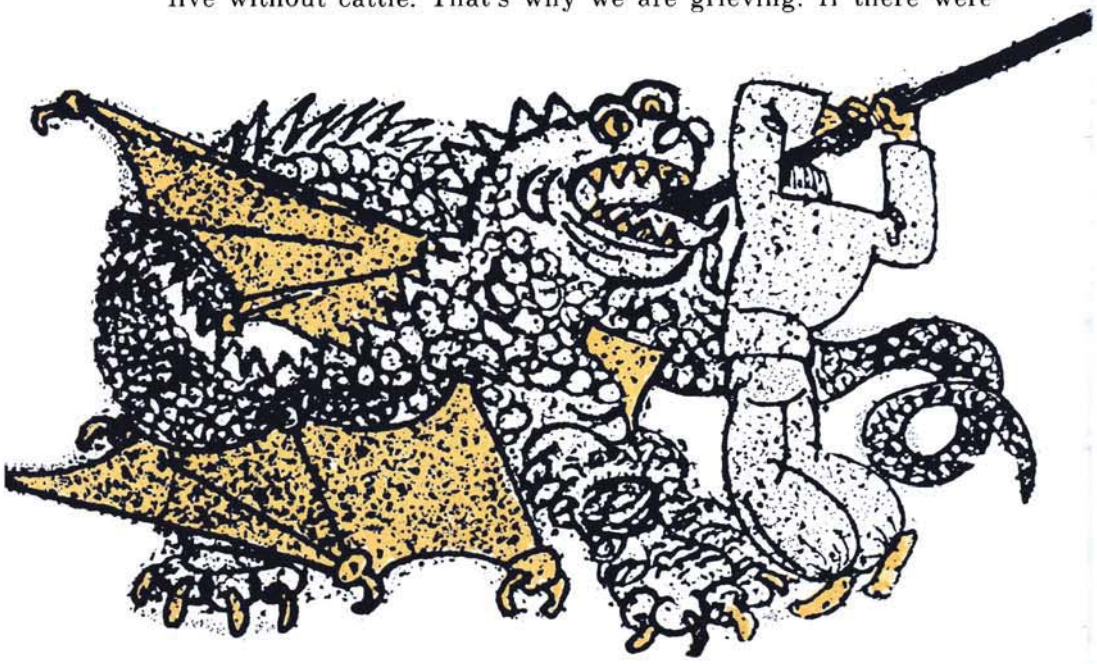
"You see, my son, when a great deed is performed by someone who is strong and clever it is not worth as much as when it is accomplished by someone who is weak and inexperienced. Remember, great deeds are often performed not by men who know much and have great strength, but by those who are strong in will and wish."

The master's answer completely satisfied Ivan and set his mind at ease.

Once the giant invited Ivan on a trip. They mounted their horses and set off. On their way they rode through a city which was in mourning. Black flags drooped from the flagpoles. Ivan

and the giant asked the townsfolk what evil had befallen the city, and they answered:

"Our city has been visited by a dreadful dragon. He has eaten up half of our cattle and will probably devour the rest of it if we do not bring him the Czar's daughter. She has a good heart and has agreed to give herself up to the monster. Of course, it's hard on her, but it's hard on us too, for we cannot live without cattle. That's why we are grieving. If there were



only a brave man who would slay the dragon, the Czar would give him his daughter in marriage and his Czardom as a reward."

"Ivan, you must free the Czar's daughter and rescue the country from this disaster," said the giant.

They returned home and Ivan untied the black horse he had taken from the black vampire, bid farewell to the giant and set off for the city.

When he arrived there, he learnt that the Czar's daughter had already gone to the dragon in the forest. Ivan overtook the dragon just as he was making his way to a large cave.

"Czarevna!" Ivan cried out. "It's too early for you to die!"

When she saw Ivan, the tears on her cheeks dried and she smiled at him with happy eyes. Ivan went up to the cave into which the dragon had disappeared, and shouted:

"Hey, you! Creep out of there, I've come to fight you!"

"Wait a while, you human midget, I'm not ready yet," a thunderous voice replied from the cave.

Shortly after, the dragon flew out of the cave with a threatening hiss and terrible roar. Ivan jumped on his horse and rushed to engage him.

They clashed in mortal combat. Ivan chopped one head after another off the dragon's body. But no sooner did one head fall than another appeared in its place, spitting fire at Ivan and searing him. Ivan felt his strength draining away.

In a flash the dragon knocked him and his horse to the ground, and fell on Ivan and started to choke him. Ivan leveled his sword and ripped open the monster's belly. The dragon let out a roar that shook the leaves off the trees. But that was already the cry of death.

Ivan looked about him and saw the Czar's daughter standing at a distance.

"Why are you so sad? The dragon is dead and you can go home to your parents," he said to her.

"I will not go home alone," she said. "I'll go only with you, for you have saved me and my people."

She took Ivan by the hand and they mounted his horse and rode to the city.

The people were weeping and mourning their Czarevna.

"Stop crying, I'm alive," she said. "Ivan has rescued me!"

What a jubilation there was! The people followed them to the Czar's palace. The Czar was also pining away with grief over the loss of his only daughter, but when he saw her beaming with happiness he wept for joy. When he was told that Ivan had saved his daughter from certain death, he gave her in marriage to him. A wedding feast was held the like of which the world had never seen! Ivan invited his master, the giant, to the feast and there they were making merry and gay, and if they're still alive, they're having their fun to the present day.

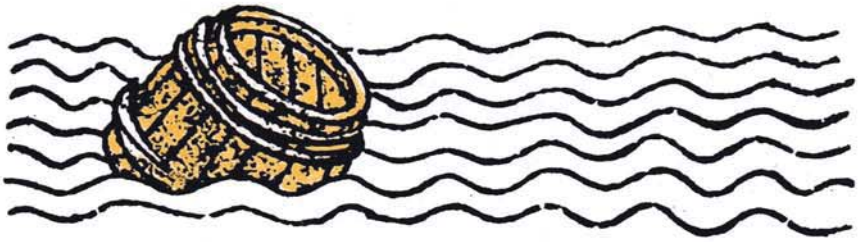
Along the highway which the *chumaks* traversed carting salt from Crimea, rode the rich merchant Marko, followed by a caravan of valuable goods.

The merchant was so rich that his fame spread far and wide, beyond hill and dale and in our land as well. Once, when he was passing through a little village, he had an unusual experience. No sooner had he entered the village than a man came running up to him entreating him to be the godfather of his child. At first Marko flew into a rage at the man's impudence, but then he agreed, thinking that this might be a lucky omen.

After the merchant had wined and dined to his heart's content, he left some presents for the newly christened boy and set off on his journey. As Marko rode on his horse smoking his pipe, he would from time to time turn round to have a look at his caravan which stretched a mile behind him.

At eventide, when he arrived in his home town, he was given a hearty welcome by the townsfolk who accompanied him right up to the palace. Marko gave orders for the caravan to be unloaded, while he supped substantially, and then went to bed. In his dream his godson appeared to him and said:

"Listen Marko, some day all your riches will be mine."



Marko started to shout, but suddenly he was struck dumb with fear as a huge bird descended upon him. It was so big that it shielded the sun from Marko and it became dark like on an autumn night, and only the claws of the bird glistened like steel hooks.

The bird clawed Marko by his silken sash and carried him off into the sky. His body felt as rigid as a log. The bird flew on and on till it came to a sea far down below, and then it opened its claws. Marko was frightened out of his wits and his heart started to flutter like a trapped rabbit's.

Down he went at breathtaking speed. Well, that's the end of me, flashed through his head as he fell. But he did not fall, neither did he bruise himself, nor did he plunge into the sea.

The dream made him jump to his feet, and he did not have a wink of sleep till the morning. The thought of his godson never left his mind, for the merchant was loath to surrender his riches to him. Somehow he managed to go about his affairs that day, but from then on he could not get a peaceful night's sleep. No sooner did he close his eyes than his godson appeared in front of him — tall and strong, in a linen shirt, and, with a smile on his lips, said:

"All your riches will be mine some day."

Marko tried to jump at him, but something seemed to hold him tightly bound to his bed and he could not move his hands nor his feet and he could not utter a sound.

He suffered for a long time in this way, and finally decided to get rid of his godson.

Once on his way through that village he visited his godson and saw that he was indeed growing into the handsome lad who came to him in his dreams every night. His lips wore the same smile, only he was still too young to say, "All your riches will be mine," although it seemed that any moment these words would fly off his tongue. Looking at him, Marko got the pangs and said to the boy's father:

"Listen, man, sell me your boy, my godson. You've got enough children, while I've got none. I'll give him an upbringing fit for a Cossack."

"Oh no," answered the man, "let there be as many of them as there are. True, my heart aches at the sight of their gobbling up the food at the table, but it sings with joy whenever I see them working as industriously as they do."

But Marko went on to beg and to plead with the man to let him have the boy. In the end he managed to buy him for quite a pretty price.

When Marko left the village with his caravan, he ordered his servants to tar a large barrel. In it he placed his godson, put a sturdy lid on the barrel, and when the caravan was passing a river dumped the barrel into the water, and continued on his journey.

The barrel rolled with the waves till it hit the bank by a convent. Just then the nuns were doing their wash, and when they saw the barrel they fished it out of the water, because it would do quite well for pickles. When they opened it, they found a boy in it. Now, what could they do with him? They

could not possibly throw him back into the river, and so the nuns kept him at their convent.

The boy grew up into a handsome lad. When he came of age, the nuns gave him food and drink and saw him off into the big wide world. He started working as a farmhand, wandering from one landlord to the other in search of a better living. Thus he came to the manor of the rich merchant Marko. Seeing that the lad was strong and hard-working, Marko decided to make him his chief carter.

Once he asked him:

"Who are you and whence do you hail?"

"I really don't know. It seems that I have no kith or kin since some nuns found me in a floating barrel," the lad replied smilingly.

When Marko saw that smile on his face, his blood ran cold and he turned pale as a ghost. He recognized his godson immediately and was just waiting for him to say, "Everything that is yours will be mine." But the lad just stood there and smiled.

"All right," said Marko. "I want you to be my chief assistant. But first you must perform a task for me. Beyond the blue sea there lies an unknown country where you can get some good merchandise for a cheap price. Go there and have a look at it."

Nobody had ever succeeded in reaching that place, for it lay beyond high rapids and whoever wanted to cross them had to apply for the services of a wicked ferryman who threw the travelers overboard in the middle of the river. And nobody could reach that country by sea either, for a huge whale roamed the sea, overturning all the ships bound for the unknown land.

While the lad prepared for the journey, Marko felt happy as a king, because none whom he had sent on this mission had ever returned home alive.

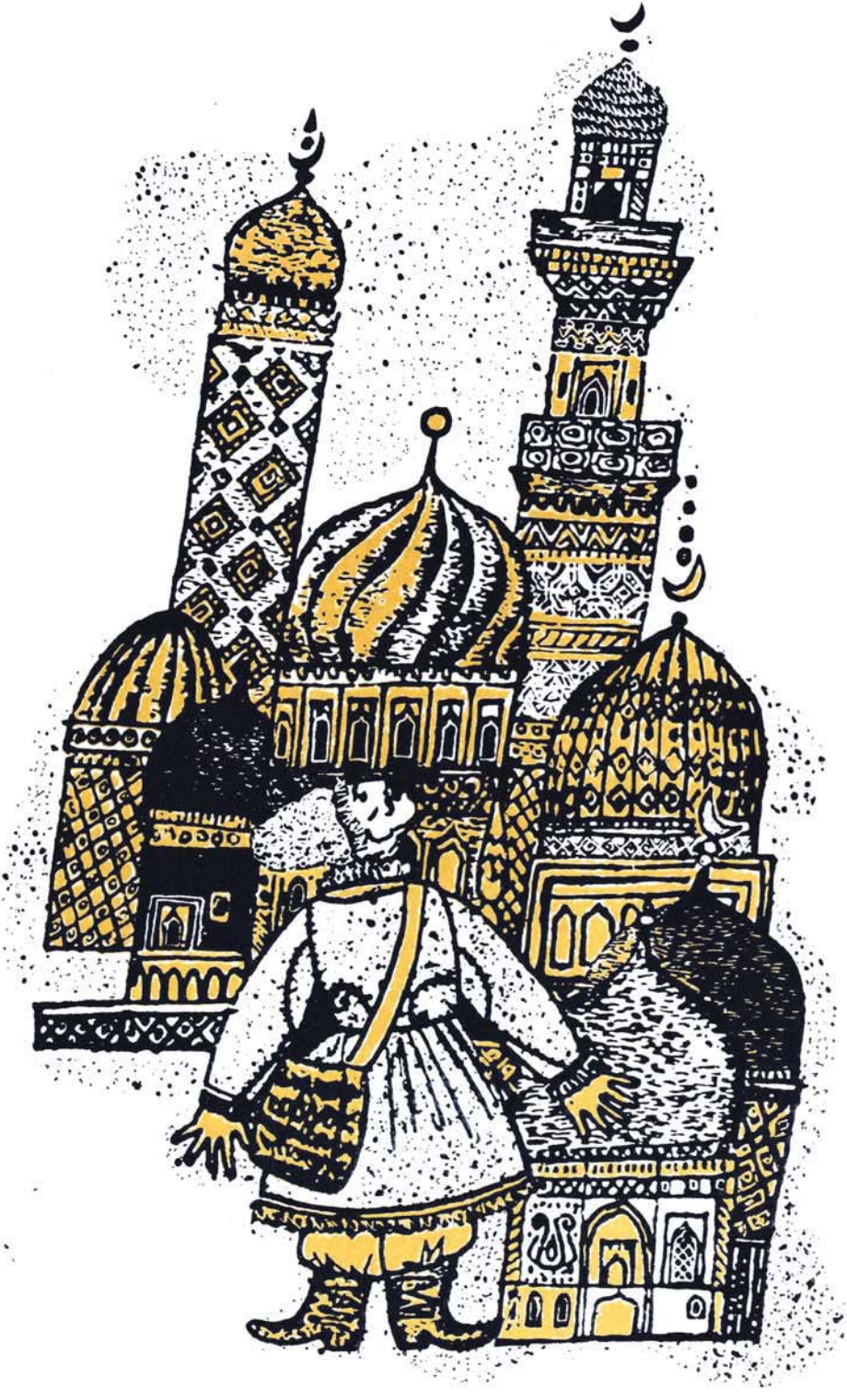
The lad walked on and on till he came to a wide roaring river so awesome to behold that it could not be possibly crossed by any human being. The lad called for the ferryman in such a husky voice that sent the ferryman a-trembling and his ferry a-rocking on the waves.

When the ferryman came up to the bank, he asked:

"Where do you come from and where are you going to, laddie?"

"I'm one of Marko's men bound for the unknown land beyond the blue sea," replied the lad.

The lad jumped onto the ferry and they pushed off. But all the while he did not take his eyes off the old man. When they reached the middle of the river where the swirl roared in wild



abandon, the old man struck the water with his oar and the ferry broke in two: the half with the old man passed the rapids safely, while the second half with the lad on it was sucked into the maelstrom. The lad thought it was the end of him, and then he saw four water nymphs looking at him from the four sides of the ferry, and softly singing a song. They guided his ferry into quiet waters and pushed it to the shore. The lad jumped on land and went in the direction of the sea.

For a whole week he roamed the arid steppe and was almost on the verge of death from lack of water when he saw the glittering surface of the sea far in the distance. Summoning his last strength, he broke into a run. Suddenly he came upon an old, old man whose hair was white as cream. The old man stopped the lad and asked:

"Where are you hurrying so, my son?"

"To beyond the blue sea," replied the lad.

"And who sent you there, my son?" the oldster asked.

"Marko the rich merchant."

To this the oldster said:

"Listen to what I have to tell you, son. Marko wants to do great mischief to you by sending you on this mission. Nobody has ever returned from it, and hardly anyone has ever reached that land beyond the sea. But if you really want to get there, wait here till the whale turns his tail around, jump on it, make your way to the whale's head, and hide there till it gets to the other shore. But don't forget one thing: beyond the sea lives a cruel Czar who is a friend and crony of Marko. Don't tell him where you've come from. If you do, you will perish."

The lad thanked the oldster and went to the sea to wait for the whale. He waited and waited till eventide when something like an island with a fountain in the middle of it appeared on the horizon. As it approached the shore, a mighty storm broke out. The lad saw the huge tail, made his way to it by jumping from boulder to boulder on the shore, and then ran up the back to the fountain where, as the old man had told him, the whale's head was.

He had to run about five hours till he reached the fountain. For seven long weeks he floated on the back of the whale. To stay alive, he caught fish with his shirt. On the eighth week they approached the shore and the lad jumped on land.

No sooner did he touch ground than he was seized by the guards of the Czar and taken to him to be questioned.

"We plied the seas and oceans," said the lad, "and once a huge whale attacked us and sucked in all our twelve ships. I was on deck just then, and with the water fountain gushing

out of the whale's head I was thrown on its back and lived there till it reached these shores."

The Czar believed his story and let him go in peace.

The lad wandered through the foreign land for a long time. He learned the foreign tongue and many other useful things, and returned the same way he came. When he arrived at Marko's manor, he told him everything he knew about the land beyond the blue sea.

Foaming with rage, Marko saddled his horse and rode to the ferryman to punish him for his disloyal service.

He stood on the bank and ordered the ferryman to come to him at once. But the ferryman could not pull up no matter how hard he tried. So he stretched out his oar, asking Marko to take hold of it and pull him in. No sooner had Marko taken hold of the oar than the old man jumped off the ferry, leaving Marko on it. The oar was such that whoever took it into his hands could not get free of it till he was relieved by someone else ignorant of this fact.

From that time on Marko became a ferryman. The lad gave away all the wealth of the merchant to the poor and they all lived in health and cheer and grew richer from year to year.

DANILO WHO HAD NO LUCK

Once upon a time there was a man, Danilo by name, who was very unlucky. Whatever he did, whatever he made turned out a flop. He had nothing in the world to call his own. One day he hired himself out to a farmer, saying, "I will work a year for you if you sow twenty-seven acres of wheatland for me as a reward." The farmer agreed. As the days passed, the wheat started to sprout. When the farmer's wheat was in the stalk, Danilo's was in the ear, and when the farmer's wheat was in the ear, Danilo's was already ripe.

"Tomorrow I'll reap my well-deserved reward," Danilo said to himself.

But during the night the sky became overcast, dark clouds gathered, and hail showered down on the field, destroying the crop completely. Danilo burst into tears at such a mishap, and said:

"I'll go and find myself another place of work."

He offered his services to another farmer.

"I'll work a year for you," he said, "for that shaggy colt over there."

After some months Danilo noticed that the colt was growing into a handsome horse. He was overjoyed at the prospect of having such a beautiful mount of his own. But during the night a pack of wolves fell on the horse and tore it to pieces.

Danilo was overcome with grief, and, weeping, he said:

"I'll go and find myself another place of work."

He came to another farmer. Not far from his farm there lay a tombstone. No one knew where it came from and how long it had been standing there.

"I'll work for you for that stone," said Danilo.

As time went on, he noticed that the stone started to change: on one side it grew red, on the other silver, and on the third gold.

Well, that stone's safe anyway, thought Danilo.

But the very next day, which was the last of Danilo's service, somebody stole the stone. He burst into tears, because once again he had worked for nothing.

"Since you're so unlucky," he was told, "go to the Czar. He is like a father to all of us, and he'll certainly do something for you."

Danilo went to the Czar as he was told, and the Czar gave him a place at the court.

"Do what you can," said the Czar, "and we'll see how unlucky you really are."

Danilo took to work, and soon the Czar saw that whatever he did none could excel him.

"Now, what's all this talk about you being unlucky?" said the Czar. "I can see for myself that none can better you in anything you do. I want to reward you for your labors."

The Czar went and took three barrels: one he filled with gold, another with coal, and the third with sand. To Danilo he said:

"If you can guess which one of these barrels is filled with gold, I'll make you a Czar. If you point to the barrel with coal, you'll be a blacksmith, and if you pick out the barrel with sand, you're really unlucky. I shall then give you a horse and arms and turn you out of my Czardom."

Danilo circled and circled round the barrels, he fingered and touched them one after another.

"This one here," he said at last.

They opened the barrel and it turned out to be the one filled with sand.

"Well, you really are unlucky," said the Czar. "And now begone, I don't need such subjects as you."

The Czar gave him a horse and arms, also a Cossack outfit, and sent him away.

Danilo rode for a whole day, and the next day too, and did not find anything to eat, either for himself or for his horse. On the third day he came upon a haystack.

Well, at least there's something for my horse, Danilo thought.

But no sooner did he approach the haystack than it burst into flames. Danilo could not help but weep, and as he did so he heard a voice coming from the haystack:

"Rescue me, or I'll burn to death!"

"How can I rescue you when I can't come anywhere near the haystack?" said Danilo.

"Hold out your musket, I'll grip it, and you'll pull me out of the flames", said the voice.

Danilo held out his musket and pulled and pulled, and pulled out a serpent.

Good God, of all the things!... he thought.

"Since you have pulled me out of the flames, take me to my home," said the serpent.

"But how shall I find the way to your home?" Danilo asked.

"Take me on your horse," said the serpent, "and in whatever direction I turn my head, go there."

As they rode on, the serpent would turn its head, and Danilo would follow the course it indicated. At last they arrived at a farmstead so nice and beautiful that it was a delight to behold. The serpent slid down from the horse onto the ground, and said:

"Wait for me a while, I'll be back soon."

And with these words the serpent slipped under the gate of the farmstead.

Danilo stood there waiting and waiting, and just as he decided there was no sense in waiting any longer, the serpent appeared before him in the shape of a beautiful lady in gorgeous raiment. Opening the gate, she said to him:

"Lead in your horse and have something to eat and drink."

They went into the courtyard, and there in the middle of it were two wells. She scooped a little glass of water out of one of them, placed it on the ground, threw a handful of oats beside it, and said:

"Come, bring your horse over here."

Well, well, how do you like that, Danilo thought, for three days we hadn't had a bite to eat, and here she's trying to play tricks on me with that scant dole of oats.

Then she took him to her guest-chamber and there she offered him a morsel of bread and a little glass of water.

Why, that's as good as nothing for me to eat, he thought.

But when he chanced to look out of the window, he saw that the glass of water and the oats were almost untouched, while his horse seemed to have eaten its fill. He bit into the morsel of bread and drank of the water, and at once he felt sated, although everything remained as if untouched.

"Have you eaten your fill?" she asked him.

"Oh yes, thank you," he replied.

"Now lie down and rest awhile."

The next day when Danilo rose, she said to him:

"Leave me your musket, horse and clothes, and I will give you a new outfit instead."

She gave him a shirt and a weapon, and said:

"This weapon is such that when you swing it with whatever strength you have, you'll kill everyone in reach, and this shirt is such that when you put it on, no force on earth will destroy you. And now go on your way till you come to an inn. There you'll hear the news that the Czar is looking for a knight to whom he might give his daughter in marriage. Ask for her hand, and when you marry her, mind you do not tell her the secret of your invincibility for seven years."

Danilo bid farewell to the lady and went on his way. He arrived at the inn, and there he was asked who he was and whence he came. When he said that he had come from another land, he was told:

"An enemy force has beseiged our Czardom. The Czar cannot overcome it, and he is looking for a knight who will free his land and bring back his daughter who has been carried off."

Danilo was shown the way to the Czar's palace.

He told the Czar that he was prepared to repulse the enemy. "Just give me two Cossacks," he said, "so they keep me informed of whatever happens."

He took the Cossacks with him into the steppe and bid them lie down and sleep while he kept watch.

No sooner were they asleep than the enemy attacked, threatening to kill Danilo. But he did not flinch and stood his ground, never retreating a step.

So the enemy started to shower him with cannon balls, and fired them in such plenty that soon the two Cossacks were buried under them. Danilo swung his weapon, and only those whom his blows did not reach escaped with their lives. He defeated the enemy, regained the captured land, married the Czar's daughter, and reigned over the country.

But his enemies would not take their defeat lying down, and started to scheme against Danilo.

"Why have you given your hand to that bootless fellow," they said to his wife. "Nobody knows who he is and whence he came, while we are of noble birth. Try to find out wherein lies his strength so we can destroy him and give you a more fitting husband."

She was taken in by their wiles and went after her husband, bent on finding out the secret of his strength.

She kept on asking and asking, and he said to her:

"My strength lies in my gloves."

Late in the night when he was asleep she pulled the gloves off his hands and gave them to the enemy.

The next day when he went out hunting, the enemy ambushed him and assailed him with his gloves. But he swung his weapon with such might that it killed everyone in reach, and those who survived were taken prisoner and thrown into the dungeon.

But his wife went on coaxing and wheedling to get at his secret.

"My strength lies in my boots," Danilo told her.

She stole his boots that night and gave them to the enemy. When the enemy tried to fall upon him, he again clubbed everyone with his weapon, and those who were not killed outright were taken prisoner and thrown into the dungeon.

But at long last his wife got the better of him with her persistance and he told her the truth.

"It is this weapon and shirt which make me so strong."

So she began to persuade him to go and have a nice bath.

"My father used to do so quite often," she said.

He let himself be persuaded, and no sooner had he cast off his shirt than she substituted another shirt for it and an ordinary weapon for his magic one, and gave all that to the enemy. After the bath the enemy seized him, chopped and hacked him to pieces, threw the pieces into a sack, tied the sack to the saddle of his horse and let it go into the steppe. The horse wandered around aimlessly for a while and then it headed for the farmstead where it had been reared. There the lady saw it and exclaimed:

"Oh Lord, something terrible must have happened to Danilo!"

She quickly undid the sack, took out the hacked pieces of Danilo's body, washed them and put them together. From one well she fetched healing water, and from the other she took living water, sprinkled Danilo's body with it, and he came back to life.

"Didn't I tell you not to disclose the secret to your wife for seven years?" she chided Danilo.

He stood there, shamed and silent.

"All right, go and get some sleep," she said. "I'll see what I can do for you now."

The next day she gave him a belt with the words:

"Go to the same inn as before. Stay the night there, and early next morning, when you will be washing yourself, ask the innkeeper to beat you across the back with this belt as hard as he can. The moment you scoop up some water you will be back at your wife's palace, but mind you don't tell her a thing."

Danilo rode to the inn as he was told, and stayed there for the night. The next morning, when he went to wash himself, he said to the innkeeper:

"Please hit me across the back with this belt as hard as you can, when I start washing."

As he splashed in the water, the innkeeper whacked him with the belt and instantly Danilo turned into a horse so beautiful and mettlesome that it was indeed a sight for sore eyes.

"My oh my, he came here with one horse, and now he himself has become one," said the dumbfounded innkeeper.

That same day he took the horse to the fair to sell it, and among those who saw it was the Czar himself.

"What do you want for the horse?" he asked.

"Five thousand," the innkeeper told him.

The Czar handed him the money and took the horse. Terribly pleased with himself for having made such a good bargain, he called his daughter as soon as he came home and said:

"Come here, my dear, and take a look at the horse I've bought."

"Oh Lord, that horse will be my ruin!" she exclaimed. "You must kill it."

"But, my dear, how can I do such a thing?"

"Slay it you must, you simply must get rid of it!" she insisted.

So they sent for knives and axes and started sharpening them, when a maiden of the court came up to the horse, and feeling sorry for it hugged it, saying:

"Oh poor, darling horse, you are so beautiful, and they want to kill you!"

And the horse neighed to her:

"Watch carefully where the first drop of my blood falls. Take it and bury it in the garden."

When they killed the horse, the girl did as she was asked, and buried the drop of blood in the garden. And from this drop there sprung a cherry tree. One of its leaves was silver, another one was gold, and every leaf on the tree was of a different color. One day the Czar went for a walk in the garden. When he saw the tree, he immediately took a great liking to it, and swelling with pride over his new possession he praised it to his daughter:

"Take a look what a wonderful tree we have in our garden. Who can tell when it appeared."

But no sooner did she see it, she exclaimed:

"Oh Lord, this tree will be my ruin! Chop it down!"

"But, my dear," said the Czar, "how can I do such a thing? It is the fairest adornment in our garden."

"It must be cut down," his daughter insisted.

So preparations were made to fell the tree, when the same maiden appeared and said:

"Oh, darling little cherry tree, what a beauty you are, and yet they will cut you down."

"Never mind," said the cherry tree. "You watch carefully where the first chip from my trunk falls. Take it and throw it into a stream."

They chopped down the cherry tree. The girl did as she was asked, and threw the first chip into a stream, and from that chip there appeared a drake so beautiful that it was a true wonder and joy to behold.

One day the Czar went hunting and spied the drake. He took off his clothes and plunged into the water after it. But the drake lured him farther and farther away from the bank. When he was a good distance away, the drake swam up to the bank, changed into a man and put on the clothes of the Czar, for, in fact, these were Danilo's clothes.

"Now swim hither, swim hither," Danilo urged the Czar.

The Czar swam up to the bank, and there Danilo killed him. Then he went to the palace and inquired for the maiden.

When they called her, he said:

"It is you who brought me back to life for the second time."

Danilo took the maiden in marriage and they lived happily ever after. As for his first wife, he ordered her to be tied to the tails of horses and torn to pieces.

A TALE ABOUT THE LITTLE LINDEN TREE AND THE GREEDY OLD WOMAN

Once upon a time there lived an Old Man and an Old Woman. They were very poor. One day the Old Woman said to the Old Man:

"I wish you'd go to the woods and chop down a little linden tree so I'd have something to heat the oven with."

"Very well," said the Old Man. And he took his ax and set out for the forest.

There he picked out a little linden tree. He swung his ax high and was about to chop down the tree, when he heard it plead in a human voice:

"Please, don't chop me down, good man, I might do you a good turn some day."

The Old Man was so frightened that his ax slipped out of his hand, and he was too astonished to speak.

When he came home, he told the Old Woman what had happened.

"What a fool you are!" she said. "Go back to the linden right away and ask it for a horse and cart. Haven't we already done our share of walking in this life?"

"As you wish," said the Old Man, and he took his hat and left.

When he arrived at the tree, he said:

"Linden, linden, the Old Woman asks that you give us a horse and a cart."

"Very well," answered the linden, "You'll have what you want. Go home."

The Old Man went home, and there in front of the house he saw a horse hitched to a cart.

"You see!" said the Old Woman. "We're better off now, aren't we? But I'm afraid our house is about to collapse. Go to the linden and ask it for a decent house. Maybe it'll give us one."

The Old Man went to the linden and asked for a new house.

"Very well," the tree answered, "you'll have what you want. Go home."

When the Old Man came home, he could not believe his eyes: in place of the tumbledown house there stood a beautiful new cottage. The Old Man and the Old Woman were as happy and excited as children.

"Why don't you go and ask for some cattle and fowl now? After that we won't need anything else."

The Old Man went to the linden with the request.

"Very well," said the linden, "you'll have what you want. Go home."

When the Old Man saw the yard full of cattle and fowl he was overjoyed.

"Now there's nothing else we need," he said.

"No, that's not enough," said the Old Woman. "Go and ask the linden for money as well."

The Old Man went to the linden and asked for some money.

"Very well," said the linden, "you'll have what you want. Go home."

When he came home, he saw the Old Woman sitting at the table stacking gold pieces into little heaps.

"Well, we're rich now," said the Old Woman. "But that's not all. People must fear us now that we are rich. Go and ask the linden to make everybody fear us."

The Old Man went to the linden with the request.

"Very well," said the linden, "you'll have what you want. Go home."

Back home, he saw lots of soldiers and police guarding his property. But for the Old Woman this was not enough yet.

"Well, Old Man," she said, "you must go to the linden and ask it to make all the people in the village our farmhands. What else can we wish for now that we have everything?"

So he went to the linden to ask for yet this favor. For a long time the linden did not reply to his request. Then it said:

"Go home, your last request will be fulfilled."

The Old Man came home, and lo! there was nothing there except their old tumbledown house and the Old Woman standing beside it. That's how the little linden tree punished the greedy Old Woman for wanting all the villagers to become her farmhands.

A TALE ABOUT THE STOLEN POSTOLI * *AND THE BOILED EGGS*

*Bukovinian ** Folk Tale*

Once Botushkan, a rich villager, conspired with the Devil and asked him to steal something from his poor neighbor Danilo.

The Devil rummaged through Danilo's hut the whole night, but he could not find anything, for Danilo was poor as a church mouse. When the first cocks were about to crow, the Devil got hold of a pair of *postoli* standing under the bench, and took off to Hell.

In the morning Danilo, yawning and rubbing his eyes, groped sleepily for his shoes, but they were gone. And outdoors it was freezing cold.

Danilo swung his legs down from the oven and sat there thinking and wondering how he could live through the winter without any *postoli.* Presently the door opened and Botushkan came in.

"Why do you look so sad, Danilo?"

"What's there to be happy about when I'm ruined root and branch. Some devil has sneaked into my hut and pinched my only pair of *postoli.* That's why I'm sitting here like an idiot."

Botushkan's eyes sparkled with glee, and he said with a make-believe sympathy:

"Don't worry. I'll buy you a brand new pair of shoes and you'll clear the debt by working a year for me. Agreed?"

Danilo agreed. What else could he do?

From morn till night he toiled for his rich master. Botushkan's wife fed him niggardly, and Danilo was a big fellow and was hungry as a wolf all the time. In the end he grew so weak he could barely stir his stumps. So one day he came to his master and said:

"How can I work when my stomach growls and moans, wild for food?"

The rich man's eyes sparkled with glee at that, and he said with a make-believe sympathy:

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* *postoli* — a soft leather heelless shoe or boot with the sole overlapping the sides of the foot and the toes and joined with a puckered seam; similar to the North American moccasin

** *Bukovina* (Northern Bukovina) — historical name of the present Chirnivtsi Region in western Ukraine (Tr.)

"All right, Danilo, I'll tell the mistress to give you a boiled egg every day. By the end of the year you will have cleared the debt. Agreed?"

"Surely," said Danilo, happy that from now on his belly would not feel hollow like a Turkish drum.

The whole year Danilo slaved like an ox to pay for his *postoli*. He plowed and sowed and threshed, and all the time misery held him by the heel. As agreed, Botushkan's wife gave him a boiled egg every day. He gulped it down greedily to still the pangs of hunger, but before he knew it he was as hungry as before.

The rich man thrived through Danilo's sweat, for he liked to reap the fruit of other people's toil. When the year drew to an end, he wanted to make Danilo stay. So he called him to his house and said:

"You've paid off for your shoes, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have."

"And you ate one egg each day?"

"Yes, I did."

"And to me you did great harm."

"What harm?"

"You devoured three hundred eggs," said the moneybag, his eyes glinting with wolfish greed. "If my wife had placed those eggs under brood hens I would have had three hundred chicks. And if those chicks had grown up they would have laid me thousands of eggs. And if those eggs had been placed under brood hens I would have had thousands of chicks. If I had sold them at the fair I would have received a sackful of money and would have been far better off than I am now. So you see, you devoured that sackful of money. If I take this case to court they'll make you work another year for me to pay for the eggs you've eaten."

"Master, you're fair without, but foul within," said Danilo. "May God grant you a life of hundred years so that you'll never see the sunrise tomorrow. I won't work for you any more."

"Of yes, you will!"

"Oh no, I won't"

"Then I'll seek justice and you'll rue the day you tried to cheat me!" Botushkan roared like a bull.

"All right, go ahead."

Botushkan put on his *serdak* *, hitched the horses to his cart, and took off to town.

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* *serdak* — coat of coarse wool (Tr.)

For days Danilo roamed the hills and dales with a heavy heart, trying to think of a way out.

"What makes you so sad, good man?" his neighbor asked him one day.

He was an old and wise Hutsul who knew everything that was taking place in the world. He had a blue mirror tucked behind his belt, and when he looked into it he saw where the hare had spent the night, where the stars bathed in the sea, and what made the sun smile happily. He understood the language of the trees, and he knew why the moon cast a melancholy light on the hills.

"What's there to make merry about, neighbor, when I'm down in the world. That blasted Botushkan has fixed me all right. He made me work for him a year for nothing and now he's dragging me to court. What would you advise, neighbor?"

"A rich man's greed is boundless, Danilo, and he who becomes a sheep makes easy prey for the wolf."

"So I'll land in jail after all?"

"Might goes before right and beggars cannot be choosers. The judge is a learned man, but my little blue mirror would not reveal a single thing to him, for a judge's heart is always clouded."

The neighbor took the mirror from under his belt, looked into it, then he gazed at the ground, scanned the sky, the mountains and woods, and suddenly a smile appeared on his lips. He beckoned to Danilo and whispered something into his ear for a long time.

Danilo listened attentively, nodding from time to time, and then he, too, began to smile.

The day of the trial came. Botushkan appeared in court on time. The clerk and the judge had taken their places and were waiting for Danilo, but of Danilo there was no sight. They waited for an hour, then for another hour, but still Danilo did not show up. The judge fumed, the clerk raved, and Botushkan all but bust from anger.

At last the door burst open and Danilo came rushing in, panting and sweating. He even forgot to doff his cap in the court room.

"Where've you been, you tramp!" they hollered at him.

"Excuse me, Your Honor, and forgive me, Sir Clerk, for being so late. You see, I was very busy working."

"What were you doing all that time?"

"You see, I was boiling potatoes and then planting them, boiling beans and planting them, boiling oats and planting them, boiling rye and planting it, boiling barley and —"

"Stop it, what are you jabbering about?" the judge interrupted him. "How can you plant boiled potatoes and sow boiled rye! How can you expect a crop therefrom? Don't you give me any of that claptrap!"

"But, Your Honor, there will be a crop, for as Botushkan said he'd have thousands of chicks from the boiled eggs his mistress gave me."

"Botushkan, what eggs did your wife give this man?" the judge asked to make the matter clear.

"Boiled eggs, Your Honor," Botushkan replied.

The judge looked at the clerk, then at Danilo, and then at Botushkan, and gave a roar of laughter.

The clerk looked at the judge and then at Botushkan and also erupted into a loud "Ha-ha-ha!"

They laughed and they roared till they had laughed themselves blue in the face and their sides nearly split. Their roar drew the whole neighborhood to the courthouse.

Botushkan stood there for a while flabbergasted, and feeling viciously tricked he grabed his cap and made himself scarce.

Once upon a time there lived a man who was poor as a church mouse. There were days when his children had to go to bed hungry, for there was no food in the house at all. He had a rich brother. And while the poor man had children, his rich brother had none. Once the rich brother met the starveling.

"Brother, pray for me and ask the Lord to send us a son, then I'll invite you to be his godfather."

"All right, I will pray for you," said the poor brother.

After a year or so, the poor man heard from other people that a son had been born to his rich brother's wife.

"Did you hear that my brother has a son?" said the poor man to his wife.

"No, is it true?" she asked.

"As true as true! I'll go to my brother, for he told me that if they had a son he would invite me to be the godfather."

"Don't go there," his wife said. "If he had wanted you to be his son's godfather he would have invited you himself."

"I'll go anyway and have a look at his son," said the man.

When he came to his brother's house, he was invited to take a seat at the table. Presently a rich neighbor arrived, and the master of the house asked his poor brother to move a bit and let the guest take the place of honor.

The poor brother moved, and then another rich guest arrived, and he moved again, and soon there was such a crowd of moneyed guests in the house that the poor man barely found a place for himself by the door. His brother pressed food and drink on his rich friends and did not so much as offer a crumb from the table to his poor brother. So the poor man reached into his pocket, fished out some sunflower seeds and started nibbling at them, making believe that sunflower seeds were the best thing to eat after a good draught of brandy. The rich guests, seeing what he was doing, asked him for some.

"Here, help yourself," he said.

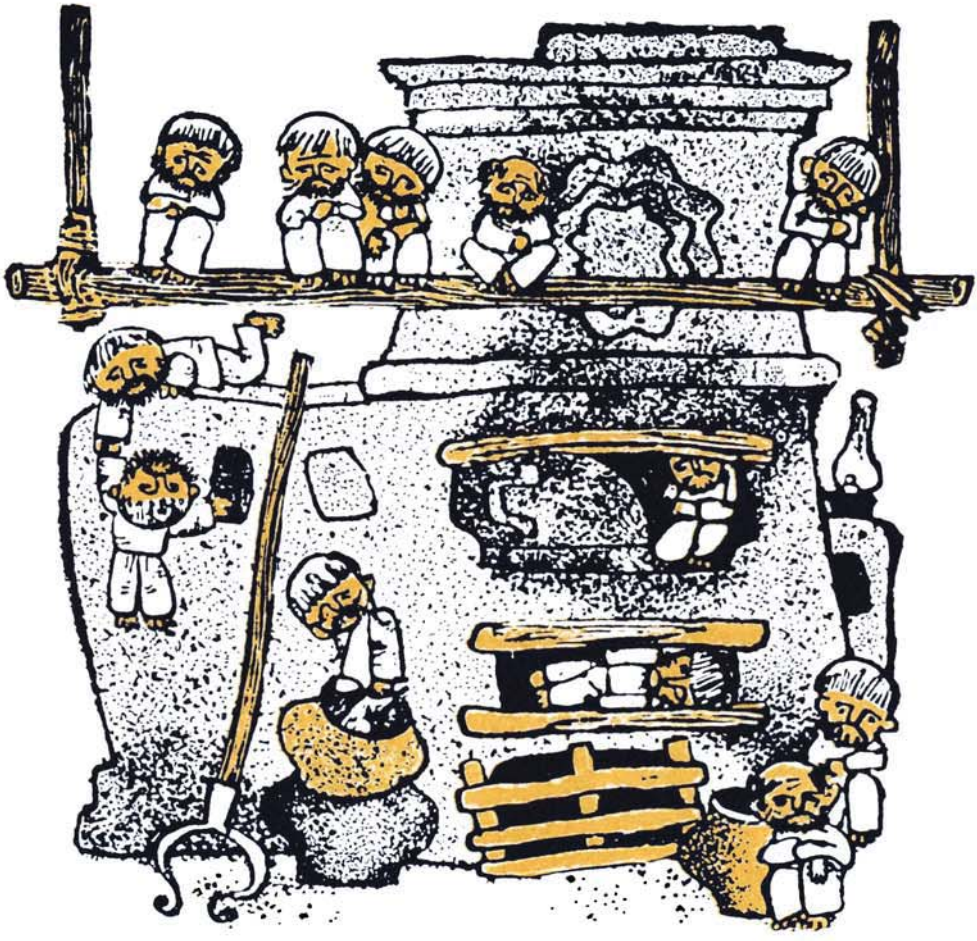
One guest took some, then another stretched his hand out, and yet another, and soon they had taken the last from him. He sat on by the door for some time and then went home.

"Well, how was it?" his wife asked him.

"Just like you said. I felt less than a godfather there. The rich didn't give me a crumb from their table, and even took the last of my sunflower seeds."

That day was Sunday. Being a fiddler, the poor man took his fiddle and started playing to drive dull care away. When

the children heard the music, they jumped to their feet and danced. As the man looked on at their merriment, he noticed a strange little creature, accompanied by a whole horde of its kind, also dancing to his music. In surprise he stopped playing,



and in that same instant the lot of them rushed to the oven, and hurriedly pushed and squeezed their way under it.

"Who are you?" asked the man.

One of them answered in a shrill voice from under the oven:

"I'm Misery and that's my brood!"

"Good God!" exclaimed the man. "Now I know why I'm so poor. I've got Misery in my house!"

And he asked them:

"Do you feel comfortable under there?"

To which they replied:

"You call this comfortable? It's so terribly overcrowded here! Can't you see how many we are?"

"Very well," said the man. "I'll find a more spacious nest for you, if you'll just wait a minute."

He quickly ran out of the cottage, found a barrel, brought it in, and said to the whole lot:

"Get in there, all of you!"

They crawled out of their hideout and into the barrel. The man clapped the lid on, took the barrel out into a field, and dumped it there. When he returned home, he told his wife and children that he had at last got rid of Misery.

"Well, maybe God will help us make some sort of a living now," he said.

Half a year or so had passed and he began to prosper so quickly that even the rich envied him. Whatever he did, whatever he sold, he made a profit; whether he planted his field to wheat or rye, the stalks all but bent to the ground from weight of the full, heavy ears. Everyone wondered how this man, who was once unable to keep the wolf from the door, had started doing so well.

His rich brother grew green with envy. One day he came over and asked:

"How come that you made a fortune out of nothing?"

"I did away with Misery that's all."

"And where did Misery disappear to?"

"I sealed it in a barrel and dumped it way out in a field."

"Where?"

"Over there in the gully."

The rich brother ran as fast as he could to the gully and found the barrel. He hastily broke open the lid, and Misery and its brood popped out.

"Go to my brother, he's rich now," said the rich man.

"Oh no," they said. "He's so cruel. See how he cooped all of us in this barrel. But you are a kind man and we'll gladly go with you."

The rich man took to his heels, but they clung to him, and for all his trying to shake them off he brought them into his house just the same. From that time on Misery and its brood started to multiply by the thousands, and soon there was Misery galore in the rich man's house. He became even poorer than his poor brother had been. And no matter how much he blamed himself for the wrong he had done, nothing helped — Misery was there to stay.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a hen
With the money he could spare.
And the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a duck
With the money he could spare.
And the duck cries qu-a-ck!
While the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a goose
With the money he could spare.
And the goose gaggles ga-ah!
While the duck cries qu-a-ck!
And the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a sheep
With the money he could spare.
And the sheep bleats ba-ah!
While the goose gaggles ga-ah!
And the duck cries qu-a-ck!
And the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a goat
With the money he could spare.
And the goat skips and jumps,
While the sheep bleats ba-ah!
And the goose gaggles ga-ah!

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself an ox
With the money he could spare.
And the ox stamps the ground,
While the cow lows mo-oh!
And the goat skips and jumps,
And the cat meows mi-aow!
And the dog barks bo-ow!
And the sheep bleats ba-ah!
And the goose gaggles ga-ah!
And the duck cries qu-a-ck!
And the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

Once a good old man
Didn't know how to fare,
So he bought himself a cart
With the money he could spare.
And the cart squeaks and creaks,
While the ox stamps the ground,
And the cow lows mo-oh!
And the goat skips and jumps,
And the cat meows mi-aow!
And the dog barks bo-ow!
And the sheep bleats ba-ah!
And the goose gaggles ga-ah!
And the duck cries qu-a-ck!
And the hen — cluck! cluck! —
Struts around his little farm.

HERITAGE